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O N

T A S T E.



**AN ESSAY ON TASTE**  
(1759)

TOGETHER WITH  
OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE IMITATIVE  
NATURE OF POETRY

BY  
**ALEXANDER GERARD**

A FACSIMILE REPRODUCTION  
OF THE THIRD EDITION (1780)  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY  
**WALTER J. HIPPLE, JR.**

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA  
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# INTRODUCTION

## I

Born on the twenty-second day of February, 1728, in the manse of the Chapel of Garioch in Aberdeenshire, Alexander Gerard died exactly sixty-seven years later, on his birthday in 1795. He was the eldest son of a minister of the Kirk, and his life, like that of his father and of his son after him, was devoted to the service of religion, though in colleges rather than villages. Even in an age when university students were callow, Alexander Gerard was precocious: he matriculated at Marischal College in Aberdeen at twelve, and was awarded his M.A. at sixteen. After pursuing theology for some years at Aberdeen and then at Edinburgh, he was in 1750 appointed interim professor of philosophy at Marischal. When Providence shipwrecked and drowned the regular professor, Gerard kept the chair. In the curriculum then obtaining at Marischal (as in several of the Scottish universities), one professor led his charges through the entire curriculum of philosophy and science; so that at an age when modern scholars are just taking their B.A.'s, Gerard was giving a course which started with logic, followed on with ontology and pneumatology, began the descent to the world of concrete fact with morals and politics, and concluded with natural science. Gerard's first published work, indeed, was a "Plan of Education in the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen" (1755); under his scheme, which was adopted, the student would begin with classics, advance through history, mathematics, natural philosophy, and belles lettres, to (in his fourth year) pneumatology and natural theology, moral philosophy, logic, and metaphysics, the more abstract sciences coming last rather than first.

Gerard's next publication, and his most important, is

## INTRODUCTION

that here reprinted, the *Essay on Taste*. This prize essay was written for a competition sponsored by the Select Society of Edinburgh, of which Gerard was a member. This group of intellectuals formed themselves into a sort of Scottish Academy in 1754, meeting in the Advocates' Library (of which Hume was keeper) on Wednesday evenings. The members presided in rotation, each in his turn choosing for discussion a topic from a list approved by a committee. Not content with truth, the society resolved upon action, and on 13 March 1755 adopted a plan to offer premiums in the various arts and sciences, "the rewards of merit in the finer arts [being] honorary, in the more useful arts generally lucrative" — a distinction still too often observed. For the purposes of this program the group assumed the style of "The Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture, in Scotland." "After the example of foreign academies" — so we read in the *Scots Magazine* for March, 1755 — the society resolved that "two subjects be annually proposed; one chosen from POLITE LETTERS, and one from the SCIENCES; and that the best discourse on each . . . be distinguished by some public mark of the respect due to the taste and learning of the composer," the first premium of all, however, being reserved for inventive genius in arts or sciences. Accordingly, gold medals were struck for "the best discovery in Sciences," "the best essay on Taste," and "the best dissertation on Vegetation and the principles of Agriculture." Among other awards, silver medals were proposed for the "best printed and most correct Book, of at least ten sheets," the "best imitation of English blankets," and the best hogsheads of "Scots Strong Ale" and of porter. There were monetary premiums for the most useful invention in arts, the best bundles of linen rags (for paper-making), the best carpets, the best drawings of fruits, flowers, and foliage by boys and girls under sixteen (for printing fabrics), and the "best imitation of Dresden Work on a pair of men's ruffles" (five guineas, or a medal instead if the winner should be a woman of fashion) — and so on.

The *Essay on Taste* was among the first fruits of the Scottish Renaissance thus stimulated; the premium, though delayed, came to Gerard in January, 1758 (*Scots Magazine*); the book itself appeared the following

year, with the distinction of being printed for Millar in the Strand as well as for Edinburgh.

Gerard was a member also of the philosophical society which Reid and John Gregory founded in Aberdeen in 1758, and which lasted until 1773. A smaller group, this society met in taverns for fortnightly papers and discussions – with much more philosophy than port or porter. The talk ranged widely – the source of our pleasure in representations of objects which arouse painful passions; how to determine the parallax of the sun by the transit of Venus; whether justice is a natural or artificial virtue; in what cases lime is a proper manure; whether instruction by the Socratic method or by lectures is preferable; whether a high national debt is beneficial; whether cause-&effect involves more than constant conjunction; and so forth. Reid himself read papers later included in his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*. George Campbell anticipated his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Gerard himself – besides such questions as the proper subjects of demonstrative reasoning, whether courts of law and of equity should be distinct, and the ways in which watering improves land – took the topic, “Whether poetry can be justly reckoned an imitative art; and, if it can, in what respect?” (26 January 1768), asked “Whether any account can be given of the causes why great geniuses have arisen at the periods which have been most remarkable for them, and why they have frequently arisen in clusters” (12 December 1769). These questions anticipate, of course, the appendix to the third edition of the *Essay on Taste* (1780) and his *Essay on Genius* (1774). Indeed, the president of the society enquired in 1758, “Is there a standard of taste in the fine arts and in polite writing; and how is that standard to be ascertained?” (March 22 and May 10) – the very question of the Part IV which Gerard added to the *Essay on Taste* twenty-two years after. And Farquhar’s topic (April 22, 1758), “In the perfection of what faculty does genius consist? Or if in a combination of faculties what are they?” was quashed because superseded by “Mr. Gerard’s Discourses” – a clear confirmation of Gerard’s assertion in the preface to the *Essay on Genius* that he had written Part I and made progress in Part II as early as 1758.

The Aberdeen group shared a literary style — clear and straight-forward, but plain — and a philosophy. They were the school of common sense: “Common sense,” declared James Oswald, “perceives and pronounces upon all primary truths with the same indubitable certainty with which we perceive and pronounce on objects of sense by our bodily organs.” Reid, Stewart, Beattie, and the rest —Gerard included — echo this sentiment. One of the persistent foci of discussion and attack in the Society was the system of Hume. In a letter to Hume (18 March 1763), Reid writes, “Your friendly adversaries, Drs. Campbell and Gerard, as well as Dr. Gregory, return their compliments to you, respectfully. A little philosophical society here, of which all three are members, is much indebted to you for its entertainment. Your company would, although we are all good Christians, be more acceptable than that of Athanasius; and since we cannot have you upon the bench, you are brought, oftener than any other man, to the bar; accused and defended, with great zeal, but without bitterness. If you write no more in morals, politics, or metaphysics, I am afraid we shall be at a loss for subjects.” Reid was of course to lead the reaction in Britain and France against the philosophical chemistry of Locke and Berkeley and Hume, with its dissolving of so many “primary truths” into simpler elements and its unsettling of principles upon which religion and morality might seem to rest. Campbell directed his great treatise on miracles against Hume. And Beattie’s *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism* earned him the immortality of Reynolds’ portrait, in which Beattie — Truth in hand —regards us with calm triumph while an angelic figure brandishing a sword drives into perdition and hideous ruin Sophistry, Scepticism, and Infidelity, often identified as Voltaire, Hume, and Gibbon (though Sir Joshua acknowledged only the likeness of Voltaire). This was the philosophical company Gerard kept, and it is surprising to find in him so much of the Humeian analyst as we do alongside the inevitable concessions to “common sense.”

The two psychological essays on taste and genius are the products of the young philosopher, notwithstanding

that one was not published until 1774 and part of the other until six years later. The sermons and the longer religious works of Gerard's later years are of less interest. To be sure, the "Sermon Preached before the Synod of Aberdeen" in 1760, and titled "The Influence of the Pastoral Office on the Character Examined; with a View, especially, to Mr. Hume's Representation of the Spirit of that Office" tells us something more of its author's attitude towards the great sceptic; and it contains some remarks on philosophic method which parallel those in the *Essay on Taste*. But the *Dissertations on Subjects Relating to the Genius and Evidences of Christianity* (1766), *The Pastoral Care* (1799), and the *Compendious View of the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion* (completed and published by Gilbert Gerard, 1828)—these show us only that a man who is, after all, pretty much a Humeian in his view of the mind, and who indeed carried out some associational analyses more systematically than did Hume himself, could yet remain an orthodox (though amiable) Scottish divine. But as the religious writings have only modest pretensions to originality and are rather humdrum in manner, we may neglect them here. Nor need we examine the latter portion of Gerard's life, save to remark that in 1760 he became professor of divinity in Marischal College and (a conjunct post) minister of Greyfriars Church, Aberdeen, both which places he relinquished in 1771 to accept the professorship of divinity at King's College, Aberdeen. Here he remained until his death, when he was succeeded by his son Gilbert.

## II

Since I have commented upon the *Essay on Taste* at some length in *The Beautiful, The Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-century British Aesthetic Theory*, and since the essay itself lies open to the reader, I shall not here repeat that analysis, but instead shall attempt to place Gerard's book in its philosophic context.

The aesthetic theorists of the eighteenth century in Britain comprised a clearly defined school, the leading members of which are easily identified even by their references to one another's work. In the early decades of

the century, Addison, Hutcheson, Hogarth, Gerard, and Burke evolved the most important theories; though Shaftesbury, Hume, Akenside, and that John Baillie from whose essay on the sublime Gerard borrowed some thoughts deserve mention too. After Burke the names crowd more thickly, but it is easy to identify Lord Kames and Archibald Alison as the most distinguished figures, even by the evidence of popularity (for *Elements of Criticism* and the *Essays on Taste* ran through dozens of editions during the next century). The picturesque group of Gilpin, Price, and Knight; such eminent philosophers as Reid, Dugald Stewart, and Adam Smith; critics like Blair; artists expounding the principles of their arts, like Reynolds and Humphry Repton; amateurs and men of letters who caught the fashionable infection—all essayed the task of explaining the nature of beauty. And they are all quite self-consciously a continuing tradition; Dugald Stewart, writing at the end of the century, refers to more than twenty predecessors (and a dozen French writers as well), and most of these refer to their own colleagues and predecessors.

But it is more than cross-references that constitutes the British aestheticians a school: they have important traits in common. All are concerned, not merely with the criticism of letters, plastic art, or gardening, but with the problem of beauty itself. Beauty—or sublimity, or picturesqueness, or the ridiculous—is a quality, more philosophically a mode, which pervades both art and nature; and it is characteristic of the British aestheticians that they begin with the study of natural rather than artificial beauty. It is the method of British empiricism, a logistic method of analysis into primitive elements and synthesis of these into the more complex wholes. The beauty of nature is simpler than that of art, more widely experienced, less the subject of partisan quarrels: it is here that the roots of aesthetic experience can be exposed. The more complicated effects of art can be understood when, to the elements common with natural beauty, the analyst adds an account of imitation and of the influence of artful design.

British philosophy in the eighteenth century, like Western philosophy generally from Descartes to Dewey, was psychological. "Whatever relates to our ideas and per-

ception, and even to our sentiments and feelings," declared D'Alembert, "is the true domain, the proper sphere of philosophy"; and every Briton would echo him. And in Britain especially, the dominant mode of philosophizing was empirical and atomistic, the tradition of Bacon and of Locke. The problems of philosophy were to be stated and solved in terms of simple and elementary ideas and feelings; so with aesthetic theory. The problems of aesthetics fell into this form: there are certain peculiar feelings, the sentiments of beauty (or of sublimity, or picturesqueness, or of the ridiculous) which require careful discrimination; then they must be accounted for, and although most writers of the age dabbled also in final causes, the account that really mattered was in terms of efficient causes. What are the circumstances of natural and artificial things which evoke these peculiar sentiments? And by what mechanism do they do so? In all, three problems: distinguishing the feelings themselves, isolating the causal circumstances, and discovering the mechanisms of causation.

It is true, an occasional thinker among the British aestheticians had a dialectical orientation instead of the literal and atomistic method of Locke. By "dialectical orientation" I mean that the same principles are applied analogically in the realms of the true, the good, and the beautiful; that these principles are commonly arranged in pairs of polar contraries ("general and particular," "being and becoming," and the like); that the key terms therefore appear in multiple senses, metaphorically related, and typically at "higher" and "lower" levels. A "literal" philosophy stresses rather the differences of different sciences; reasons by cause-&-effect sequences rather than by contraries and analogies; and employs terms univocally or in clearly differentiated senses. If the philosophy is atomistic as well as literal (which need not be the case), there is also the effort to reduce complex phenomena into combinations of similar elements.

Shaftesbury initiated a somewhat dialectical vein of speculation at the same time that Addison took the first steps along the other path. But Shaftesbury had no followers — or rather, his professed disciple, Hutcheson, tacitly revolutionized Shaftesbury's thought by slipping much of the superstructure of doctrine onto a new basis;

Hutcheson made Shaftesbury literal, though himself remaining a more analogical thinker than most of his successors among the British aestheticians. Now and again throughout the century, a dialectical treatment of aesthetic problems reappeared — most notably in Reynolds — but such occasional outcroppings scarcely modified the tenor of the tradition: empirical, literal, atomistic. Addison, not Shaftesbury, was the pioneer; and the writers of the tradition fully agreed that (as Hugh Blair put it) Addison had “the merit of having opened a track, which was before unbeatened.”

The merest glance at Gerard’s work shows him to be an eminently literal, and a keenly atomistic, thinker. He follows Addison, follows him quite consciously; but having a far more analytical mind, and being moreover under the spell of Hume and Scottish philosophy, he advances far beyond Addison in the systematizing of aesthetics and the explanation of beauty.

One of the marked features of the discussion in the British school was the distinction of aesthetic modes: of the beautiful and the sublime, the picturesque, the ridiculous. These distinctions, exported to the continent, became prevalent there as well; and Kant and Schopenhauer find them as essential as do Gerard and Burke. Such modes remain central even for moderns like Santayana; indeed, they have become permanently impressed upon European languages, and vestiges of aesthetic theories linger in the terms of common discourse. Such discrimination of modes of beauty has of course an intrinsic plausibility, which stems from the fact that qualities or modes are recognized by contrast with different or opposite properties. The tendency is perhaps inevitable, then, to distinguish beauty, in the indiscriminate sense of “aesthetic excellence,” into contrasting modes, within which subordinate distinctions may in turn be made. Hence the beautiful and the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque, the sublime and the ridiculous, the ugly and the deformed, and so forth.

But granting that such distinctions are natural and plausible, we may yet ask, What called them forth in such abundance at just this time and place? Inventive philosophic genius, no doubt; but there were also definite historical antecedents which help to explain the operation

of that inventive genius. First of all, such distinctions had long been made in rhetorical theory, for the classical rhetoricians regularly discriminated various styles. Demetrius had found four: the plain, the elevated, the elegant, the forcible, together with their perversions, the arid, frigid, affected, and repulsive; and except for the plain and the elevated, which were incompatible, the styles could blend to form still fresh varieties. Quintilian distinguished three styles: the plain, the grand or forcible, and the intermediate or florid, again with intergrades. Cicero, the authority of all others for the eighteenth century, distinguished (among others) a masculine and a feminine style, in which we perceive at once an analogy to the distinction of sublimity from beauty. And Longinus's discussion of the sublimity of language was of course a cause of the evolution of sublimity as a general aesthetic category; Longinus himself gave some warrant for such generalization in his oft-quoted likening of the sublime to the mighty phenomena of nature, to the Rhine and the Danube, to mountains and oceans.

Yet there remains a wide gap between the study by rhetoricians of literary styles and the study by aestheticians of qualities or modes which pervade all nature and all the arts. This gap is partly bridged by the art criticism of the Renaissance, in Italy and later in France, where the fashion prevailed of distinguishing styles in painting, or in the other visual arts. Once a grand style is distinguished from (say) an elegant style in painting, it is comparatively easy to see the same qualities in the natural objects which are represented in the paintings. The imitations of literature are not (to use a valuable term of Thomas Twining's) immediate: the words and their patterns do not resemble, save in special instances, the objects they signify; and their effects upon us cannot be fully accounted for simply by thinking of their objects. But the imitations of painting *are* immediate, in that the form and color of the artifact represent the form and color of natural things; and much more of the effect of painting is attributable to our reactions to those natural things, or to the habit of seeing the painted representations partly as if they were the objects themselves. Now, Bellori and his successors were well known to cultivated English gentlemen of the early eighteenth century; Dry-

den himself had translated Bellori's "Idea of a Painter," a handful of pages probably the most influential document ever penned in the criticism of art. And minds prepared by classical rhetoric and by Renaissance art criticism might easily find beauty and sublimity in the world about them. The two preparatory disciplines can still be separately discerned in some of the earlier British aestheticians. Thus Addison, in his critique of *Paradise Lost*, regularly uses "sublime" in the rhetorical sense to refer to linguistic devices, images, and thoughts which elevate and transport. But he employs "great," "noble," and other synonyms to describe objects, events, or characters which strike the beholder with awe and admiration. (When he speaks of Milton's "sublime genius," I should add, he means not a genius which is sublime as an object of contemplation but one which strikes out sublime thoughts and turns of speech.) Jonathan Richardson, again, reserves "sublimity" for the "transcendently excellent," and uses "greatness" to describe grand objects and noble character (see the second edition of his *Essay on the Theory of Painting*, 1725). But the two currents rapidly blended, and a single comprehensive account came to embrace the beauties and sublimities of literature, of the visual arts, of music, and of Nature.

Other strands, too, were woven into the fabric of these theories. Throughout the century, taste and practice in landscape gardening interacted powerfully with aesthetic theory; Pope's pregnant essay on gardening in *The Guardian* of 1713 comes at the very beginning of the tradition, and his couplets in the "Epistle to Burlington" are balanced at the end of the century by the polished verses of Richard Payne Knight's *The Landscape*, the first manifesto of the picturesque controversy. Since gardening is the art which comes closest to nature, an art more of rearrangement than of representation, garden theory blended not only with the theory of landscape painting but with an aesthetics of natural scenery. The taste for gardens, landscape painting, and wild Nature demanded a general aesthetic of scenery, whether natural, embellished, or imitated.

But Gerard's book is not only a theory of beauty and the other aesthetic modes; the title declares rightly that it is a theory of the taste which apprehends and judges

these. And the filiations of the *Essay on Taste* on this side are less with the speculations of Addison than with the metaphysical psychology of Locke and his successors. The *Essay on Taste* is an essay in faculty psychology. And the writer to whom Gerard owes most is Hume. Like Hume, he is a reductionist: "Nature," he declares, "delights in simplicity, and produces numerous effects, by a few causes of extensive influence." But notwithstanding this aim of reducing phenomena to few and simple principles, Gerard draws back from some of the explications of Hume and displays his allegiance to the men of "common sense." Like them, Gerard takes the principle of universal causation and that of the uniformity of nature as implanted convictions; he supposes awareness of the perceiving and active self to be an inference accompanying every mental state; he considers that the existence of an external world causing our sensations is known by immediate inference; he supposes that memories are accompanied by an intrinsic conviction of pastness; and that there is a determination of our nature to credit the testimony of others. Yet all these qualifications of Humeianism have exceedingly little influence upon the analysis of taste and genius. Their weight would be felt in theology and cosmology (and may have been adopted with such application in view), but in his aesthetic speculations Gerard is almost as systematically reductionist as Hume; and he stands in striking contrast with Lord Kames, his contemporary as a Scottish aesthetician, whose genius, more consonant with the philosophy of common sense, lay less in analysis to least elements than in the ingenious proliferation of original principles.

The elements of this mental chemistry are (as in Hume) ideas, sensations, and passions, together with the associative links which bind them into complex wholes or transform them into new species of feeling. Gerard is an associationist, but one must not be misled by his own use of the term "association." Like Locke and Hutcheson and the common-sense writers, Gerard often uses that term to designate only the more casual or extrinsic links between ideas; sometimes the word bears even a pejorative connotation, as if associations were idiosyncratic and likely only to distort our perceptions of truth or of beauty. Taking the term in a broader sense, however, as embrac-

ing all those ways in which ideas and feelings call up one another, fuse together, or modify each other, one must pronounce Gerard's system radically associationist. Indeed, in the *Essay on Genius* he goes beyond Hume in working out the detailed associational explanation of some facets of mental life. Chambers is essentially correct in remarking that Gerard was "the first person who laid [the principle of association] regularly down and argued upon it as a source of taste" (*Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*). It is the explicit and conscious use of associational analysis which distinguishes Gerard from his contemporary Burke, whose *Sublime and Beautiful*, notwithstanding its fantastic physiology, is largely an associational account, but which lays so little explicit emphasis on this circumstance that commentators (Chambers among them) perpetually cite Burke as an "objective" or non-associational theorist. It must be confessed, of course, that Gerard does not attempt to reduce all beauty to manifestations of one principle; and this hesitancy afforded opportunity to future theorists. As Chambers well says, "The system of association . . . is well considered by Gerard, along with many other qualifications, which he looks upon as sources of the feeling [of beauty] — qualifications which other writers, whose ideas on the subject have not yet been confuted, have referred likewise to the principles of association for their first cause." The allusion, of course, is to Alison and Jeffrey.

Gerard adopts a number of Humeian devices to effect some of his explanations. Thus, he employs the notion of sympathy ("which enlivens our *ideas* of the passions infused by it to such a pitch, as in a manner converts them into the passions themselves"); and that of conversion of the passions (see Hume's "Of Tragedy"), which serves to explain some part of the influence of novelty and of the pleasure from imitation of unpleasant originals. Indeed, the important principle that the mind may "spread itself on objects" is itself Humeian, though employed of course by many other writers. Gerard makes use of the association of feelings as well as of ideas; and his flexibility allows him to escape some of the more strained reductions of Hutcheson and Baillie. He need not find one essence of beauty (like Hutcheson's uniformity in varie-

ty) or of sublimity (like Baillie's quantity), to which all varieties must be traced by some analogy (as with Hutcheson) or by some association of ideas (as with Baillie, who was obliged to explain the sublimity of passions, for instance, by reference to the vastness of their objects, causes, or effects). Rather, Gerard can admit resembling feelings arising from various sources, which yet through their resemblance fuse and come under a common name.

Like Hume again, Gerard has a concern with the logic of inquiry, and perceives the role both of induction from the observations (which in aesthetics are very likely to be introspections) and of deduction from established principles of human nature. But though he sees that the consilience of inductive and deductive results constitutes verification, Gerard perhaps errs in supposing that the induction can proceed through successive stages of higher and higher generalization without much help from theory, which enters only at the last to confirm or reject (cf. Part III, Sec. iii). The data of aesthetics are too subtle for this, and theory must enter from the first to guide the lines of induction; the appropriate method is what Mill called the Direct (rather than the Inverse) Deductive Method. And Gerard himself states this point when he remarks that "A conclusion is sufficiently established, if it be shown that it necessarily results from general qualities of the human mind, which have been ascertained by experiment and induction. This is the natural method of establishing synthetical conclusions; especially where an effect is produced by a complication of causes" (Part III, Sec. vi).

The imagination is, for Gerard as for Hume, the fundamental faculty of the mind. Hume, of course, takes both memory and the various modes of reason to be special modifications of imagination. Gerard allows memory a more independent status, and he asserts a variety of intuitive principles which account for some of the phenomena of reason independently of the habits of the imagination. Yet imagination still swallows up almost all the mind. The internal senses of taste are special modes of imagination; even the judgment of taste turns out to depend upon habits of fancy; and the workings of genius turn out to be imaginative as well. Gerard's essays on taste and genius steer clear of special aesthetic faculties;

they are in truth studies in the powers and workings of the imagination. .

### III

Gerard's associational psychology was more fully worked out in *An Essay on Genius*. Because that work is extremely scarce (having never been reprinted), I subjoin a brief sketch of it. As we have seen, this book is more nearly contemporary with the *Essay on Taste* than at first appears, the first part and some of the second having been composed as early as 1758; the delay was due, as Gerard tells us, to the change in his duties, i.e., to his having become a professor of divinity and the minister of Greyfriars. The aim of the essay is declared at once: "to explain the nature and varieties of Genius from the simple qualities of the human mind" (p. 4). The general plan is best grasped by noting that genius itself is an efficient cause, a faculty of invention "for making new discoveries in science, or for producing original works of art" (p. 8). And the three parts of the treatise — "Of the Nature of Genius," "Of the General Sources of the Varieties of Genius," and "Of the Kinds of Genius" — treat the faculties which go to make up the derivative faculty of genius (material cause), the modifications and mixtures of these faculties (formal cause), and the ends which marshal these modifications and mixtures into distinct species of genius (final cause).

Imagination is the inventive faculty; or, more exactly, the associating power of imagination is the origin of genius. When the fancy is "comprehensive" and copious, "regular" in connecting ideas not only one with the next but each with the whole of some design, and "active" in finding and arranging materials, association acquires the peculiar vigor of genius. And just as judgment enters as an ingredient into taste, so is it comprised in genius; it is requisite for making the just inferences essential to science, for insuring the regularity of fancy, even for stimulating imagination, since a decision of judgment may be the perception from which fancy operates.

The more detailed account, in Part II, of "the different forms which all the powers combined in perfect genius assume, and . . . the different laws by which they are guided" (p. 107) begins with the laws of association.

Gerard had already explained (p. 85, e.g.) that fancy is led by the natural relations of ideas or impressions, while judgment handles their philosophical relations — a distinction derived, of course, from Hume. But evident as well is the influence of the men of common sense, and especially of Lord Kames (who, like Hume, is cited as a source). The very classification which Gerard finds most useful betrays his attitude, for he distinguishes simple associations by resemblance, contrariety, and vicinity in place or time, from the “compound” relations of co-existence, cause-and-effect, and order. These last are blended from the simple relations and from principles of common sense: co-existence comprises the notion of permanence, and thus opens the way for the idea of substance, and cause-& effect entails the idea of power. This same classification is sketched in the *Essay on Taste* (p. 154), with “custom” serving as a seventh associating relation; but since custom is presumably founded on one or more of the other relations, it is not a coordinate principle, and in the *Essay on Genius* is not treated as such. (I might remark that in the first edition of the *Essay on Taste*, “order” is not in the list; nor does it appear to me a coordinate principle with the others, being explicable by the penchant of the mind to add one relation to another.) But whether or not Gerard’s principles can be somehow resolved into Hume’s, it is certain that the manner of applying them is thoroughly Humeian. So also is the ensuing account of the influences of habit and of passion upon association, and of the sub-varieties of the associative principles. Gerard’s account is complex, even at points subtle; and he candidly adopts from Hume some of the subtleties — the notion, for instance, that passions operating on the imagination may reverse the order of ideas more natural to that faculty (so that a passion is more readily transferred from a greater to a lesser object, while the fancy associates more easily from the lesser to the greater).

Variations in the ancillary faculties of memory and judgment also affect the turn which genius takes. Just as Gerard had isolated “virtues” of taste (sensibility, refinement, correctness, and balance) and of imagination (comprehensiveness, regularity, activity), so he discovers virtues of memory — that it should be susceptible, tenacious, distinct, and ready. These catalogs are not so drily

schematic as they seem in a précis, for they afford place for many perceptive observations. But Gerard's ingenuity in manipulating his system is more apparent in the correspondences he discovers between the varieties of faculties and the ends they subserve. According as memory best recalls general cause-&-effect relations, or co-existences, or particular cause-&-effect sequences, order, and vicinity — so it fits a man to be a philosopher-scientist, a naturalist, or an historian.

The kinds of genius (Part III) are distinguished by their ends; the great distinction is between the discovery of truth and the production of beauty. Gerard's own summary is succinct:

"The sum of what has been said, is this: scientific genius arises from such vigour of imagination as disposes a person to be affected chiefly by the strongest and most important relations of things, particularly by causation and co-existence, operating powerfully, giving a propensity to set every object in that attitude in which it lays a foundation for these relations; and making all the other principles of association to act in subordination to these; and it requires the assistance both of an exact and solid judgment, and of an accurate and distinct memory. Genius for the arts springs from such liveliness of imagination as disposes a person to attend chiefly to those qualities of things, which lay a foundation for relations between them and many others, to be affected by the slighter degrees of relation, or by the more trivial relations, especially to be actuated by resemblance, as his predominant and leading principle of association; with a memory similarly turned; and it requires for completing it, a quickness of discernment, and great acuteness and liveliness of taste; together with the power of imparting, by means of some sensible instrument, his own sentiments and conceptions to other men" (pp. 426-27).

Some of these generalizations are pregnant even in this abstract form. And Gerard's development of subordinate principles and applications is often surprisingly rich and plausible (though it must be granted that his instances from painting, mostly drawn from Fresnoy, are generally hackneyed and too often insensitive). The discussion of taste borrows largely, of course, from the *Essay on Taste*. New is the explanation that taste intermingles with, directs, even anticipates execution (not awaiting a survey

after completion of the artifact); that it directs and animates the observation of Nature, giving thus the initial impetus to creative imagination; and that by forming the habits of fancy, it gives regularity and correctness to creation. The relative predominance and the degree of development of the different ingredients of taste — judgment and the internal senses — determine the varieties of artistic genius.

## IV

It is important to examine briefly the changes which Gerard made in the successive editions of the *Essay on Taste*. The first edition (1759) and the second (1764) added to Gerard's own essay "Three Dissertations on Taste, by Mr. De Voltaire, Mr. De Montesquieu, and Mr. D'Alembert," in their sum about half the length of Gerard's work. All three are translated from the article "Gout, (*Gramm. Littérat. & Philos.*)" in Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (tome VII, Paris, 1757). Voltaire's piece, though brief, is the article proper; coming directly after the essay on "Gout, (*Physiolog.*)", it compares and contrasts the external sense of taste with the internal sense which by a natural metaphor borrows its name. Montesquieu's lengthy fragment had been intended for the *Encyclopédie*; interrupted where "Death snatched the pen from the hand of the ingenious writer," it was printed nonetheless, that "l'on dira dans les siecles à venir: Voltaire & Montesquieu eurent part aussi à l'*Encyclopédie*" — and also because "les premiers pensées des grands maîtres méritent d'être conservées à la postérité comme les esquisses des grands peintres." It treats of a great many circumstances which produce beauty — of novelty, order, variety, symmetry, contrast, and especially of surprise — but without the systemization or perhaps the penetration of the British aestheticians. D'Alembert's own address to the French Academy, "Réflexions sur l'usage & sur l'abus de la Philosophie dans les matières de gout" was diffidently added, "since there was no other article to which it more directly pertained." It is a neat exercise in that simpler psychology of taste which Gerard's work displaces.

But the third edition drops the French essays and adds Gerard's own Part IV, "Of the Standard of Taste," and the appendix, "Whether Poetry be properly an Imitative Art." There is every reason to think that the line of thought, and perhaps even much of the composition, of these additions had been worked out years before, at the time of discussions in the Aberdeen Philosophical Society. The psychological method of the eighteenth century led inevitably towards the kind of argument that Gerard puts forward. "The truth is," D'Alembert had remarked, "that the source of our pleasures and of our disgusts lies solely and entirely within ourselves; so that, if we reflect with attention upon our mental frame, we shall find there general and invariable rules of *taste*, which will serve as the criterion of beauty and deformity." Earlier efforts to ground a standard on the consensus of nations and ages gave place, in this tradition, to reasonings drawn from general principles of human nature. The change can be seen in microcosm in Johnson's preface to Shakespeare, where the initial argument from consensus ("no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem") gives way to the more philosophic principle, "Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature." Yet Johnson's argument is simple, compared with those of more philosophic critics like Kames and Gerard. For Gerard's argument on the standard of taste is the best of the century. Criticism here assumes the form of all developed sciences, with the middle principles and applications being drawn deductively from established first principles; direct observation and the empirical generalizations of consensus serve to suggest hypotheses and to confirm results.

Noteworthy is Gerard's sophisticated criticism of the argument of Hume, who had aimed to solve the problem (within the limits of a brief essay) by an analysis of the faculties of the critic but without entering upon analysis of the qualities and effects of the aesthetic objects, so that a sort of consensus of specially qualified judges still established the standard. It might be noted, too, that Gerard is not entirely fair to "Fitzosborne" (William Melmoth the younger), who was so far from appealing only to consensus that he asserted, implausibly, that the psychological principles of criticism, and the deductions from them, are as indisputable as the truths of mathemat-

ics (cf. Letter LXI). Fitzosborne's error is really that he thought to employ induction from works judged classic by consensus as a parallel and equally certain method of discovering criteria. Gerard is clear and insistent that consensus be used only to identify data for psychological analysis or to confirm the results of that analysis — but not to afford criteria for taste. The value of complex aesthetic objects is determined by analysis of them into their constituent elements and relations.

Apart from these changes — the dropping of the French essays and the addition of the sections on the standard of taste and the imitative nature of poetry — the third edition of the *Essay on Taste* is almost identical with the second. In the table of contents, "Sublimity" becomes "Grandeur and Sublimity," while "Oddity and Ridicule" becomes simply "Ridicule" (Part I, Secs. ii and vi); and there are a few alterations in mechanics, such as the change from geminated to single "l" in words like "dulness." But the second edition had been very carefully revised from the first. In the nine pages of Part I, Sec. i, I have noted fifty-four stylistic changes. Most of them bring the punctuation into conformity with logic and modern usage — Gerard eliminates eighteen commas before restrictive clauses, for instance. Others are changes in spelling: "shews" to "shows," but "enhance" to "in-hance." And there are some clarifications in wording. This detailed and systematic stylistic revision is carried throughout the entire essay. But there are substantive changes as well. Two paragraphs are added to the section on sublimity, that opening "What has been just now said" (pp. 17-18) and that beginning "In order to account farther" (pp. 27-28). They agree in referring the sublimity of effects to association with real or suppositional mental powers of their causes. In the case of works of art, this principle is unquestionably true, though for natural objects it entails taking them as works of divine art — naturally enough for Gerard, but not a belief necessary to all men, nor perhaps even for theists so powerful as Gerard supposes. Parallel with these additions on sublimity is an insertion in the section on beauty, the paragraph opening "There is another cause" (pp. 35-37). Again, the traits of the beautiful object are referred to their mental causes, whence the pleasure really stems;

but again Gerard blends some unnecessary metaphysics with the true aesthetic observations, for though we naturally *associate* order with conscious intelligence, it is certainly false that all men are persuaded order cannot arise from chance or mechanism. In his additions both on sublimity and on beauty, Gerard fails to distinguish adequately between mere association (which is sufficient to elicit the aesthetic response) and actual belief. It is worth remark also that Gerard employs here the Humeian principle of conversion of the passions, for admiration of the mental powers of design (in itself allied rather to sublimity than to beauty) is converted into the softer sentiment of beauty by its connection with the feeling produced by the qualities of the object itself.

The most important changes, however, are found in the first section of Part III. Sentences are rewritten, moved, added, struck out; and a long dissertation on the imagination and the association of ideas and feelings is added (p. 150, lines 8-14 and 24-26; then p. 151 line 29 to the end of the paragraph on p. 160, "which affects the perceptions of taste in many instances formerly remarked"). This passage is of the highest importance, for it greatly strengthens the associational aspect of Gerard's theory, and resembles the systematic associationism of the *Essay on Genius*. It is of course quite possible that relevant sections of that book were written, or at any rate sketched, before the second-edition changes were made in the *Essay on Taste*.

The American edition of the *Essay on Taste* (Philadelphia: Engles & Stiles, 1804) reprints the first edition, though keeping only Montesquieu of the French authors; the title page identifies Gerard as "Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic in the Marischal College," a post he had abandoned in 1760. Marc-Antoine Eidous' French translation of 1766 was based on the second edition and included the essays of the translator's countrymen.

## V

The physical bibliography of the three editions is complex. The first, to be sure, is a straightforward octavo, orthodox in every way. But the second is a duodecimo

signed and gathered in sixes; and the third is an octavo with turned chain-lines, signed and gathered in fours. An hypothesis for the second edition must account for its normal rectangular shape, its horizontal chain-lines, and its watermark, half of which is found in every gathering, always above the center of the outer edge on the fourth or sixth leaf. These phenomena suggest that the printer worked two duplicate half-sheets of six leaves instead of the usual duodecimo sheet of twelve leaves. Only twelve pages of type need be set up at one time for this procedure, instead of twenty-four. Shortage of type might dictate such a choice; again, author's copy or alterations coming in at the last moment — and Gerard's revisions in this edition are extensive and minute — might make it desirable to keep only a dozen pages ahead of him. Whatever the reason, the page layout would presumably be this:

1v	2r	3r
6r	5v	4v
6v	5r	4r
lr	2v	3v

The sheet is perfected by turning it over side-for-side; two duplicate half-sheets result, which are then cut apart. The heads of leaves 1, 2, 5, and 6 face one another; those of leaves 3 and 4 face the center, so that no heads have deckled edges. This desideratum necessitates that leaves 3 and 4 be cut off, since all methods of folding without such cutting (whatever the layout) result in some deckled edges falling at the top. After folding of the other leaves, 3 and 4 are inserted in the center and the gathering is sewn. The watermark, if conventionally placed in the middle of one half of the sheet, will be split, half of it falling near the top of the outside edge of leaf 4 or leaf 6 in each gathering (according as the sheet is laid down one way or the other). If there are two marks on the sheet, both leaf 4 and leaf 6 of each such gathering will bear half a mark. A copy of the finished book will have random proportions of top and bottom halves of the watermark; and this is in fact the case.

The third edition presents a more complex problem, since an adequate hypothesis must account both for the horizontal chain-lines and for the gatherings in four. The shape and size of the book make it evident at once that

it is an octavo, despite the signatures and chain-lines of a quarto. Consider first the chain-lines. Eighteenth-century paper was sometimes made in a double-size frame, divided to make two sheets at once; since the chains ran normally (i.e., crosswise) in the frame, the lines they impressed upon the sheets run lengthwise. In consequence, books made from such sheets will have turned chain-lines: horizontal in folios and octavos, vertical in quartos. Turned chain-lines would of course also result from the use of double-size paper cut in half. And there is no decisive test to distinguish these two possibilities in the absence of watermarks and uncut copies; unfortunately, I know no copy of this third edition which is uncut or which bears a watermark. If there were a watermark, it would occur at the top *inner* edge of a gathering folded from a sheet made two-at-a-time, but at the top *outer* edge of a gathering folded from half of a double-size sheet. And in an uncut copy, all the feet would be deckled in a gathering folded from a sheet made two-at-a-time, but only half would be deckled in a gathering folded from half of a double-size sheet. These distinctions would still obtain under half-sheet imposition.

It is likely that this third edition, like the second, was printed by half-sheet imposition — i.e., with two duplicate gatherings of four instead of the usual octavo gathering of eight. The page layout would presumably be:

2r	3v	3r	2v
1v	4r	4v	1r

The sheet would be perfected by turning it end-for-end. The reasons for such imposition seem less compelling here; except for Part IV, this edition is a simple reprint of the second. Conceivably a shortage of type or of labor motivated the choice; and the fact that no printer is specified may imply that a small jobbing printer did the work. The entire hypothesis for the third edition, then,

is that it is an octavo made from sheets with turned chain-lines (probably because manufactured two-at-a-time in double frames), and gathered in fours because printed by half-sheet imposition.

I should add that without the detailed advice of Mr. R. J. F. Carnon of the Edinburgh University Library these bibliographical analyses would have been impossible. References in the literature include: K. Povey and I. J. C. Foster, "Turned Chain-lines," *The Library*, 5th series, V, No. 3 (Dec., 1950), 184-200; Graham Pollard, "Notes on the Size of the Sheet," *The Library*, 4th series, XXII, Nos. 2 & 3 (Sept. & Dec., 1941), 105-37; K. Povey, "On the Diagnosis of Half-sheet Impositions," *The Library*, 5th series, XI, No. 4 (Dec., 1956), 268-72; Luella F. Norwood, "Imposition of a Half-sheet in Duodecimo," *The Library*, 5th series, I, Nos. 3 & 4 (Dec., 1946 & March, 1947), 242-44.

## VI

The best quick sources on Gerard's biography are Robert Chambers, *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*, and James McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy, Biographical, Expository, Critical*. McCosh, though partisan, is invaluable on the Scottish philosophers; and he gives much information on the Aberdeen Philosophical Society (partly in an appendix).

There exists little detailed commentary on Gerard's books; and of that little, still less is valuable. Scott Elledge reprints sections of the *Essay on Genius*, with notes and comment, in *Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays* (Cornell University Press, 1961). My own views (supplementary to this preface) are in *Beautiful, Sublime, and Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1957). Marjorie Grene's "Gerard's *Essay on Taste*" (*Modern Philology*, XLI [Aug., 1943], 45-58) displays ingenuity; but Mrs. Grene is unaware of Part IV of the *Essay* and does not perceive the implications of the psychological method adopted by Gerard.

On eighteenth-century criticism generally, the reader should consult R. S. Crane's fundamental essays, "English Neoclassical Criticism: An Outline Sketch," in *Critics and Criticism, Ancient and Modern* (University of

Chicago Press, 1952) and "On Writing the History of English Criticism, 1650-1800" (*University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXII [July, 1953], 376-91). See also Gordon McKenzie, *Critical Responsiveness: A Study of the Psychological Current in Later Eighteenth-Century Criticism* (University of California Press, 1949); W. Folkierski's *Entre le Classicisme et la Romantisme* (Paris, 1925); Walter Jackson Bate's *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (Harvard University Press, 1946). In the more general histories of criticism, John Wm. Hey Atkins (*English Literary Criticism: 17th and 18th Centuries*, London, 1951) omits Gerard; René Wellek's brief account (*A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*, Vol. I, London, 1955) is grotesque; and Saintsbury (*A History of English Criticism*, Edinburgh, 1911) is clever but perverse on Gerard as on so much of the eighteenth century.

On aesthetics and the history of taste, see Samuel Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (Modern Language Association, 1935; now a University of Michigan paperback); Elizabeth Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England* (New York, 1925); Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London, 1927); B. Sprague Allen's *Tides in English Taste (1619-1800)* (2 vols.; Harvard University Press, 1937); Marjorie Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (Cornell University Press, 1959). The account of the British eighteenth century in Katharine Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn's *A History of Esthetics* (2d ed., London, 1956) is too slight to be useful, though decidedly better than the sentences in Bosanquet's *A History of Aesthetic* (London, 1892).

The original pagination, altered in this reprint to conserve space, was i half title, ii blank, iii title page, iv blank, v dedication, vi blank, vii Advertisement, viii Errata, ix-xi Contents, xii blank.

WALTER J. HIPPLE, JR.

*Cambridge, England  
31 January 1962*

A N  
E S S A Y  
O N  
T A S T E.

TO WHICH IS NOW ADDED  
PART FOURTH,  
OF THE STANDARD OF TASTE;

W I T H  
OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE IMITATIVE  
NATURE OF POETRY.

B Y  
ALEXANDER GERARD, D. D.  
Professor of DIVINITY in KING'S College,  
*Aberdeen.*

THE THIRD EDITION.

EDINBURGH:  
Printed for J. BELL, and W. CREECH; and  
T. CADELL, *London.*

M,DCC,LXXX.



TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
JOHN EARL OF BUTE,  
&c. &c. &c.  
CHANCELLOR OF THE MARISCHAL  
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY OF  
ABERDEEN:

EMINENT FOR  
ELEGANCE OF TASTE, AND THE PA-  
TRONAGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES:

DISTINGUISHED BY  
THE MOST IMPORTANT PUBLIC SERVICES  
TO HIS KING AND HIS COUNTRY;  
WHICH WILL COMMAND THE HIGH  
ESTEEM, AND ENGAGE THE WARM  
GRATITUDE, OF LATE POSTERITY:

THE FOLLOWING ESSAY IS,  
IN SINCERE EXPRESSION OF THE AU-  
THOR's SENSE OF HIS LORDSHIP's AC-  
COMPLISHMENTS AND VIRTUES,

WITH PROFOUND RESPECT,  
INSCRIBED BY  
HIS LORDSHIP's  
MOST OBLIGED,  
MOST DEVOTED, AND  
MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

ALEX. GERARD.

## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

**T**HE EDINBURGH SOCIETY for the encouragement of arts, sciences, manufactures, and agriculture, proposed, in the year 1755, a gold medal to the best ESSAY on TASTE; and, not having assigned it that year, repeated the proposal in 1756. This determined the author to enter on the following inquiry into the nature of taste; the general principles of which only he presented to the Society, suspecting, that the whole might exceed the limits which they had fixed, by requiring an essay. The Judges appointed for that subject having been pleased to assign the premium to him, he is encouraged to offer the whole, as it was at first composed, to the public.

Aberdeen, Sept. 28.  
1758.

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| P. 5. l. 22. <i>for</i> form, <i>r.</i> from.<br>32. note, l. 8. <i>r.</i> ingenious.<br>70. l. 14. put a comma after<br>excited.<br>93. l. 6. <i>for</i> mean, <i>r.</i> means.<br>95. l. 7. <i>for</i> raising, <i>r.</i> rising.<br>99. l. ult. <i>for</i> known, <i>r.</i> knowing.<br>118. l. 15. <i>for</i> illusions, <i>r.</i> allusi-<br>ons. | P. 148. note, l. 10. <i>for</i> this, <i>r.</i> their.<br>151. l. 14. <i>for</i> at, <i>r.</i> is.<br>168. notes, l. 6. <i>for</i> es, <i>r.</i> et.<br>175, l. 16. <i>r.</i> kindred.<br>193. l. 14. <i>for</i> mean, <i>r.</i> means.<br>199. note, l. 1. <i>for</i> Lirigues,<br><i>r.</i> Liriques.<br>223. l. 2. <i>r.</i> ingenlous.<br>262. l. 18. <i>r.</i> the right, |
|--|--|

A N  
E S S A Y  
O N  
T A S T E.

A FINE taste is neither wholly the gift of *nature*, nor wholly the effect of *art*. It derives its origin from certain powers natural to the mind ; but these powers cannot attain their full perfection, unless they be assisted by proper culture. Taste consists chiefly in the improvement of those principles which are commonly called *the powers of imagination*, and are considered by modern philosophers as *internal or reflex senses\**, supplying us with finer

A and

\* Mr Hutcheson was the first who considered the powers of imagination as so many senses. In his *Inquiry concerning beauty and virtue*, and his *Essays on the passions*, he calls them *internal senses*. In his later works, he terms them *subsequent* and *reflex* senses ; *subsequent*, because they always suppose some previous perception of the objects about which they are employed ; thus a perception

and more delicate perceptions, than any which can be properly referred to our external organs. These are reducible to the following principles; the senses of novelty, of sublimity, of beauty, of imitation, of harmony, of ridicule, and of virtue. With the explication of these, we must, therefore, begin our inquiry into the nature of *taste*. We shall next endeavour to discover, how these senses co-operate in forming *taste*, what other powers of the mind are combined with them in their exertions, what constitutes that refinement and perfection of them which we term *good taste*, and by what means it is obtained. And, last of all, we shall, by a review of the principles, operation, and subjects of *taste*, determine its genuine rank among our faculties, its proper province, and real importance.

## PART

perception of harmony presupposes our hearing certain sounds, and is totally distinct from merely hearing them, since many who enjoy the external sense of hearing in the greatest perfection, have no musical ear; *reflex*, because, in order to their exertion, the mind reflects upon, and takes notice of some circumstance or mode of the object that was perceived, besides those qualities which offered themselves to its attention at first view. Thus the perception of any object does not give us the pleasant sentiment of novelty, till we have reflected on this circumstance, that we never perceived it formerly. In the following essay, the terms *internal sense* and *reflex sense* are used promiscuously.

P A R T I.

Taste resolved into its simple principles.

S E C T. I.

*Of the sense or taste of novelty.*

THE mind receives pleasure or pain, not only from the impulse of external objects, but also from the consciousness of its own operations and dispositions. When these are produced by external objects, the pleasure or the pain which arises immediately from the exertions of the mind, is ascribed to those things which give occasion to them. We have a pleasant sensation whenever the mind is in a lively and elevated temper. It attains this temper when it is forced to exert its activity, and put forth its strength, in order to surmount any difficulty: and if its efforts prove successful, consciousness of the success inspires new joy. Hence moderate difficulty, such as exercises the mind without fatiguing it, is pleasant, and renders the object by which it is produced agreeable. Even plainness and perspicuity becomes displeasing in an author,

author, when it is carried to excess, and leaves no room for exercising the reader's thought : and though great obscurity disgusts us, yet we are highly gratified by delicacy of sentiment, which always includes some degree of it, occasions a suspense of thought, and leaves the full meaning to be guessed at, and comprehended only on attention \*. The exercise of thought which moderate difficulty produces,

\* Some critics have explained this gratification, either by supposing imaginary refinements of reflection, or by principles which are only consequences of the pleasure that attends the moderate exercise of thought.

'Ον πάντα ἐπ' ἀκριβείας δὲ μακρηγορεῖν, ἀλλ' ἵνα καταλιπεῖν,  
καὶ τῷ ἀκροατῷ συνέρατι, καὶ λογίζεσθαι οὐκ ἀντεῖ συνέται γὰρ  
τὸ ἔλλειφθεῖν ἐπὸ σοῦ — γίνεται — εὑμετέσερθεν· συνέται γὰρ  
ἴαυτῷ δοκεῖ διὰ τοῦ, τὴν ἀφορμὴν παρεσχηκύτα ἀντεῖ τῷ  
συνέρατι τὸ δέ πάντα ὡς ἀνόητω λέγειν, καταγινώσκοντες ἕοικε τῷ  
ἀκροατῷ. ΔΗΜΗΤ. ΦΑΔ. περὶ ἐρμην. σκδ. σλ. " L'homme  
" est naturellement si amoureux de ce qu'il produit,  
" et cette action de nostre aine qui contrefait la crea-  
" tion, l'eblouit, et la trompe si insensiblement et si  
" doucement, que les esprits judicieux observent,  
" qu'un des plus seurs moyens de plaire, n'est pas tant  
" de dire et de penser, comme de faire penser, et de  
" faire dire. Ne faisant qu'ouvrir l'esprit du lecteur,  
" vous lui donnez lieu de le faire agir ; et il attribue  
" ce qu'il pense et ce qu'il produit à un effet de son  
" génie et de son habileté: bien que ce ne soit qu'une  
" suite de l'adresse de l'auteur, qui ne fait que lui ex-  
" poser ses images et lui preparer de quoi produire  
" et de quoi raisonner. Que si au contraire on veut  
" dire tout, non seulement on lui oste un plaisir qui  
" le

duces, is a principal source of the pleasure we take in study and investigation of every kind: for though the utility of many subjects enhances our satisfaction, yet the former principle, without any aid from this, often renders very great labour, not only supportable, but agreeable. Witness the delight with which antiquaries bestow indefatigable pains on recovering or illustrating ancient fragments, recommended only by their age and obscurity, and scarce apprehended to be, on any other account, of great importance. This is in general the cause of our pleasure in all inquiries of mere curiosity.

Not only the performance of actions, but also the conception of most objects, to which we have not been accustomed, is attended with difficulty. On this account, when *new* objects are in themselves indifferent, the efforts that are necessary for conceiving them, exalt and enliven the frame of the mind, make it receive a strong impression from them, and thus render them in some measure agreeable. When the objects are in themselves agreeable, these efforts heighten our satisfaction. A fine country

“ le charme, et qui l’attire, mais on fait naître dans  
“ son cœur une indignation secrète, lui donnant sujet  
“ de croire qu’on se déifie de sa capacité.” Bouhours,  
*La man. de bien pens. quatr. dial.*

country or an agreeable prospect is doubly beautiful to a stranger. It gives considerable exercise to the mind, to observe every part of it, and to conceive the situation of the several objects which it includes. A fresh discovery in science, or a new performance in the arts, gives greater satisfaction, when we become first acquainted with it, than ever after. The first time that we study a philosophical theory, the mind runs through it with eagerness, that it may get a view of all its parts ; is constantly engaged in tracing the connection of the arguments, in examining their force, in conceiving what objections can be formed against them ; and is by this means affected with an agreeable agitation, which ceases after repeated perusals have rendered the theory familiar to us. A poem or a picture is examined with a similar ardour and unremitting exertion of mind, by a person who has not seen it formerly.

THOUGH a new object be so simple as to be conceived without any difficulty, there are some situations in which it will give exercise to the mind, and will, for this reason, be agreeable. It is extremely disagreeable, to be sunk into indolence and langour, without any thing to awaken our attention, or give play to our faculties. This state is almost unavoidable, when

when we are long confined to the contemplation of a single object, or when the same object recurs very often to our view. In this case, it soon becomes so familiar, that the impression which it makes upon the mind, is too faint to give it any exercise. Memory retains all the parts of the object so distinctly, that it outruns sense, and, before we have surveyed them, informs us, that we are perfectly acquainted with them already. We find ourselves cloyed, and immediately turn from the object with disgust. Any new object will, in this situation, be agreeable ; it occurs opportunely to occupy the mind, when it was at a loss how to employ itself ; it frees us from the pain of satiety and languor ; it gives an impulse to the mind, and puts it in motion. This is always pleasant, but its pleasure is greatly augmented by the uneasiness from which it has relieved us. This is a pleasure which most men taste every day, by varying their studies, their business, or their recreations. When genuine elegance in furniture or architecture has been long the fashion, men sometimes grow weary of it, and imitate the Chinese, or revive the Gothic taste, merely for the pleasure they receive from what is unlike to those things which they have been accustomed to see. The pleasure of novelty is, in this case, preferred to that which results from real beauty.

If

IF there are some things, the novelty of which produces no degree of pleasure, this arises from their not at all enlivening the thought, or exercising the mind. If their novelty is even painful, it proceeds from their exciting some other sensation which destroys the pleasure naturally attendant on the novelty. The exercise of mind which the conception of new objects occasions, though it be pleasant in its own nature, renders a disagreeable object more disagreeable at first : for the most opposite sensations produced by the same cause, and existing in the mind at once, are easily transfused into one another, and, by their composition, form one more violent, which always follows the nature of the sensation that was most intense.

SOMETIMES the elevation and exertion of mind which springs from the mere difficulty of conceiving a new object, or from the liveliness of a new perception, is attended with surprise, which augments our delight or uneasiness, by farther enlivening the thought, and agitating the mind. For this reason, the poet and the orator, not only solicitously avoid sentiments and modes of expression which are trite and common, and search through all the stores of nature for images, figures, and illustrations, which have not been appropriated by their predecessors ; but also study to contrive  
the

the structure of their compositions in such a manner, that the commonest thoughts and arguments may surprise by the unexpectedness of their introduction \*. Even the historian, who is confined to known materials and facts, endeavours to give them the appearance of novelty, by the light in which he represents them, and by his own reflections on the causes, the effects, and the nature of the transactions which he relates. Novelty can bestow charms on a monster, and make things pleasant which have nothing to recommend them but their rarity.

In like manner, any agreeable passion or emotion which a new object happens to produce, will run into the pleasant sentiment that naturally arises from its novelty, and will augment it. A new suit of cloaths gives pleasure to a child, by its being different from his former; it likewise excites his pride, and gives him an expectation of attracting the notice of his companions. It gratifies the vanity of a fine lady, to be among the first in a fashion; it seems to proclaim her rank, to distinguish her from the vulgar, and to command respect.

THE pleasure of novelty is sometimes also  
B heightened

\* *Est enim grata in eloquendo novitas et commutatio, et magis inopinata delectant.* *Quint. Inst. Orat. lib. 8. cap. 6.*

heightened by reflection. When the conception of an object is attended with very considerable difficulty, the pleasure which we feel in the exertion of mind necessary for overcoming this difficulty, is increased by the joy with which we reflect on our success in having surmounted it. When objects are of such a nature that we reckon our acquaintance with them an acquisition in knowledge, the pleasure of their novelty arises in part from the satisfaction with which we reflect on our having made this acquisition. Both these circumstances, the consciousness of success, and the opinion of improvement, contribute to that delight which a mathematician enjoys, the first time that he comprehends a difficult and curious demonstration.

IT may be farther observed, that novelty in the works of genius and art derives additional charms from another principle, to be explained afterwards, the ingenuity which it shows. To strike out a new track, to execute what was not attempted before, displays original genius, which we always observe with pleasure.

S E C T.

## S E C T. II.

*Of the sense or taste of grandeur and sublimity.*

**G**RANDEUR or sublimity gives us a still higher and nobler pleasure, by means of a sense appropriated to the perception of it; while meanness renders any object to which it adheres, disagreeable and distasteful. Objects are sublime, which possess *quantity*, or *amplitude*, and *simplicity*, in conjunction \*.

CONSIDERABLE *magnitude*, or largeness of extension, in objects capable of it, is necessary to produce sublimity. It is not on a small rivulet, however transparent, and beautifully winding; it is not on a narrow valley, though variegated with flowers of a thousand pleasing hues; it is not on a little hill, though cloathed with the most delightful verdure, that we bestow the epithet *sublime*: but on the Alps, the Nile, the ocean, the wide expanse of heaven, or the immensity of space uniformly extended without limit or termination †.

WE

\* Most of the species of sublimity are explained, nearly from the principles here assigned, in *An essay on the sublime*, by Dr Baillie.

† Φυσικῶς πως ἀγόμενοι μὰ Δί' οὐ τὰ μικρὰ ἔειδρα θαυμάζομεν, εἰ καὶ διανυὴ καὶ χρήσιμος ἀλλὰ τὸς Νεῖλος, καὶ Ἱγροί, η Ῥᾶτοι, πολὺ δὲ ἄτο μᾶλλον τὸν ὄπειρον. ΛΟΓΓΙΝ. πορὶ ἕψεις, εμημ. λε.

WE always contemplate objects and ideas with a disposition similar to their nature. When a large object is presented, the mind expands itself to the extent of that object, and is filled with one grand sensation, which totally possessing it, composes it into a solemn sedateness, and strikes it with deep silent wonder and admiration : it finds such a difficulty in spreading itself to the dimensions of its object, as enlivens and invigorates its frame : and having overcome the opposition which this occasions, it sometimes imagines itself present in every part of the scene which it contemplates ; and from the sense of this immensity, feels a noble pride, and entertains a lofty conception of its own capacity\*.

LARGE objects can scarce indeed produce their full effect, unless they are also *simple*, or made up of parts in a great measure similar. Innumerable little islands scattered in the ocean, and breaking the prospect, greatly diminish the grandeur of the scene. A variety of clouds, diversifying the face of the heavens,

\* *Longinus* contents himself with resolving the sensation of sublimity into the *last* of these principles, without investigating the others, of which it is but a consequence : Φύσει γάρ πως ὑπό τ' ἀληθεῖς ὕψος ἵπαιρεται το ημῶν ἡ ψυχὴ, καὶ γαῦρόν το παράσημα λαμβάνουσα πληρεῖται χαρᾶς καὶ μεγαλαυχίας. Περὶ ὕψ. τμο. §.

vens, may add to their beauty, but must take from their grandeur \*.

OBJECTS cannot possess that largeness which is necessary for inspiring a sensation of the sublime, without simplicity. Where this is wanting, the mind contemplates, not one large, but many small objects †; it is pained with the labour requisite to creep from one to another ; and is disgusted with the imperfection of the idea with which, even after all this toil, it must remain contented. But we take in with ease one entire conception of a simple object, however large : in consequence of this facility, we naturally account it one : the view

of

\* It is not meant, that, in these cases, the sublimity of the ocean, or of the heavens, is destroyed ; it is only asserted that it is diminished. A considerable degree of sublimity will remain, on account of the similarity that still subsists among the parts.

† Simplicity is recommended, by an ancient critic, as requisite to sublimity in painting, on the very principle here assigned, which must render its necessity universal, as it extends equally to every other subject. Νικίας δὲ ὁ ξωγράφος καὶ τὸτο ινδὺς ἔλογε εἴσαι τὴν γραφικὴν τέχνην ἡ μικρὸν μέρος, τὸ λαβόντα ὑπὸ οὐμεγεῖδη γράφειν, καὶ μὴ καλαπορματίζειν τὴν τέχνην οὐς μικρά. ΔΗΜΗΤ. ΦΑΔ. περὶ οἴμην, ος. It is on the same principle that Longinus accounts for the production of the sublime, by expressing in the singular, what is ordinarily expressed in the plural: Τὸ γὰρ ἐν τῷ διηρημένῳ εἰς τὰ ἱωμένα ἵστοστρέψας τὸς ἀριθμός, συμβαλοῦσθεντος. Περὶ ὑψ. τμη. κδ.

of one single part suggests the whole, and enables fancy to extend and enlarge it to infinity, that it may fill the capacity of the mind.

MANY things are indeed denominated sublime, which being destitute of extension, seem incapable of amplitude, the first and fundamental requisite of the sublime. But such objects will be found, on examination, to possess qualities which have the same power to exalt the disposition of the observer. Length of duration ; prodigious numbers of things similar united, or so related as to constitute a whole, partake of the nature of *quantity*, and, as well as extension, enlarge and elevate the mind which contemplates them. Eternity is an object which fills the whole capacity of the soul, nay exceeds its comprehension, and strikes it with astonishment and admiration. We cannot survey a vast army or navy, without being sensible of their grandeur ; which arises, not so much from the largeness of the space they occupy, as from the number of men or ships which are in them united under one direction, and co-operate to a common end ; the union and similitude of the parts adding *simplicity* to the *vagueness* of their number. Hence too is derived the sublime of science, which lies in universal principles and general theorems, from which, as from an inexhaustible source,

flow

flow multitudes of corollaries and subordinate truths.

BUT do we not attribute grandeur and sublimity to some things which are destitute of *quantity* of every kind? What can be more remote from quantity than the passions and affections of the soul. Yet the most imperfect and uncultivated taste is sensible of a sublimity in heroism, in magnanimity, in a contempt of honours, of riches, of power, in a noble superiority to things external, in patriotism, in universal benevolence. To account for this, we must observe, that, as no passion can subsist without its causes, its objects and its effects; so, in forming the idea of any passion, we do not satisfy ourselves with conceiving it as a simple emotion in the mind, but we run over in thought the objects about which it is employed, the things by which it is produced, and the effects by which it discovers itself. And as these always enter into our conception of the passion, and are often connected with quantity, they naturally render the passion sublime. What wonder that we esteem heroism grand, when, in order to imagine it, we suppose a mighty conqueror, in opposition to the most formidable dangers, acquiring power over *multitudes* of nations, subjecting to his dominion wide *extended* countries, and purchasing renown,

nown, which reaches to the extremities of the world, and shall continue through *all the ages* of futurity? What can be more truly great, than the object of that benevolence, which, unconfined by the narrow limits of vicinity or relation, comprehends *multitudes*, grasps whole *large* societies, and even extends from pole to pole?

WE shall but just observe, that the sublime passions, habitually prevailing in the temper, and uniformly displaying themselves in suitable expressions and effects, constitute dignity and sublimity of character.

IT must also be remarked, that whatever excites in the mind a sensation or emotion similar to what is excited by vast objects, is on this account denominated sublime; it being natural to reduce to the same species, to express by the same name, and even frequently to confound together, those objects which we contemplate with the same or a like disposition. Hence the raging of the sea in a storm, and the loud roaring thunder, which inspire an awful sedateness, are termed sublime. Objects exciting terror are, for this reason, in general sublime; for terror always implies astonishment, occupies the whole soul, and suspends all its motions.

IN like manner, we admire as sublime superior excellence of many kinds ; such eminence in strength, or power, or genius, as is uncommon, and overcomes difficulties which are unsurmountable by lower degrees of ability ; such vigour of mind as indicates the absence of low and groveling passions, and enables a person to despise honours, riches, power, pain, death ; setting him above those enjoyments on which men generally put an high value, and those sufferings which they think intolerable. Such degrees of excellence, by an original principle of the mind, excite wonder and astonishment, the same emotion which is produced by amplitude. A great degree of *quality* has here the same effect upon the mind, as vastness of *quantity*, and it produces this effect in the same manner, by stretching and elevating the mind in the conception of it.

WHAT has been just now said, suggests to us another principle which has often great influence in enabling inanimate things to produce the sensation of grandeur or sublimity. There being in the mind a natural proneness to admire a great degree of mental qualities, the admiration bestowed on them will be likewise extended to whatever we consider as an effect of them. Now, we are disposed to consider many great or sublime objects as effects;

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and those qualities which constitute their grandeur, lead us to infer greatness of power in their cause, their magnitude necessarily requiring this for its production, and their simplicity raising our conception of the power, by seeming to imply, that they were formed at once. The greatness, for instance, of the works of nature, is considered as a striking indication of the omnipotence of their author. A vast fleet or army suggests an high opinion of the sovereign or the nation by whom they are provided or employed. In such cases, our admiration of the cause is excited by the view of the effect, and, being reflected back on the effect, heightens the sentiments of sublimity which it inspires, by means of the principles of the mind already pointed out. Thus, that mental excellence which was just now taken notice of as one species of sublimity, is, at the same time, a principal cause of the delight which we find in many other species of it.

BUT in order to comprehend the whole extent of the sublime, it is proper to take notice, that objects which do not themselves possess that quality, may nevertheless acquire it by *association* with such as do. It is the nature of association, to unite different ideas so closely, that they become in a manner one. In that situation, the qualities of one part are naturally

ly attributed to the whole, or to the other part. At least, association renders the transition of the mind from one idea to another so quick and easy, that we contemplate both with the same disposition ; and are therefore similarly affected by both. Whenever, then, any object uniformly and constantly introduces into the mind the idea of another that is grand, it will, by its connection with the latter, be itself rendered grand. Hence words and phrases are denominated lofty and majestic. Sublimity of style arises, not so much from the sound of the words, though that doubtless may have some influence, as from the nature of the ideas which we are accustomed to annex to them, and the character of the persons among whom they are in most common use. This too is the origin of the grandeur which we ascribe to objects high and elevated in place ; of the veneration with which we regard things in any direction distant ; and of the superior admiration which is excited by things remote in time ; especially in antiquity, or past duration \*.

## BUT

\* The author of a *Treatise of human nature* has very ingeniously reduced these phenomena into the principle of association ; b. 2. p. 3. § 8. I shall collect the sum of his reasoning, so far as it is necessary to take notice of it here. ‘ Because we are accustomed every moment to observe

BUT the fine arts present the most numerous examples of grandeur produced by association. In all of them, the sublime is attained

observe the difficulty with which things are raised in opposition to the impulse of gravity ; the idea of ascending always implies the notion of force exerted in overcoming this difficulty ; the conception of which invigorates and elevates the thought, after the same manner as a vast object ; and thus gives a distance above us much more an appearance of greatness, than the same space could have in any other direction. The sensation of amplitude which, by this means, comes to attend the interposed distance, is transferred to, and considered as excited by the object that is eminent and above us ; and that object, by this transference, acquires grandeur and sublimity. And here we may observe, in passing, that this natural tendency to associate ideas of grandeur with things above us, is the reason why the term *sublime* is metaphorically applied to excellence of any kind, especially to that species of it which elates the mind with noble pride in the conception. To our transferring, in like manner, the interposed space, and its attendant sensation, to the distant object, is owing the veneration with which we regard, and the value which we set upon things remote in place. And because we find greater difficulty, and must employ superior energy, in running over the parts of duration than those of space, and in ascending through past duration than in descending through what is future ; therefore we value higher, and contemplate with greater veneration, things distant in time than things remote in space, and the persons and objects of antiquity, than those which we figure to ourselves in the ages of futurity.'

ed chiefly by the artist's exciting *ideas* of sublime objects ; and in such as are mimical, this quality is chiefly owing to our being led by the exactness of the imitation to form ideas and conceive images of sublime originals. Thought is a less intense energy than sense : yet *ideas*, especially when lively, never fail to be contemplated with some degree of the same emotion which attends their original *sensations* ; and often yield almost equal pleasure to the reflex senses, when impressed upon the mind by a skilful imitation.

GRANDEUR in works of architecture may, in some instances, arise from their largeness ; for we generally estimate the magnitude of things, by comparison with those of the same species : and though no edifice is equal in quantity to many works of nature by no means accounted great ; yet lofty palaces and pyramids, far exceeding the bulk of other buildings, possess a *comparative* magnitude, which has the same influence upon the mind as if they had been *absolutely* large. But still the principal source of grandeur in architecture is *association*, by which the columns suggest ideas of strength and durableness, and the whole structure introduces the sublime ideas of the riches and magnificence of the owner.

IN painting, sublimity is sometimes introduced by an artful kind of disproportion, which assigns to some well-chosen member a greater degree of *quantity* than it commonly has \* : but chiefly those performances are grand, which, either by the artful disposition of colours, light, and shade, represent sublime natural objects, and suggest ideas of them † ; or, by the expressiveness of the features, and attitudes of the figures, lead us to conceive sublime passions operating in the originals. And so complete is the power of association, that a skilful painter can express any degree of sublimity

\* Thus, according to Hogarth, the inexpressible greatness of the Apollo Belvidere arises from the uncommon length of the legs and thighs. *Analysis of Beauty, chap. II.*

† It may be here observed, that, though the figures in painting can seldom have so great quantity as is sufficient of itself to produce sublimity ; yet the comparative *magnitude*, and also the *simplicity*, of the figures, parts, and members, are among the principal means by which a work suggests sublime ideas, and thus becomes itself sublime. The preservation of magnitude and simplicity is therefore recommended as fundamental to sublimity, in the art of painting :

— Lævia, plana,

Magnaque signa, —

Ex longo deducta fluant, non secca minutim

Quippe solet rerum nimio dispersa tumultu

Majestate carere gravi. —

*Fresn. de arte graph. ver. 108. 156. 204. 419.*

limity in the smallest as well as in the largest compass. It appears in the miniatures of Julio Clovio, as really as in the paintings of Titian or Michael Angelo.

THE sublime of those arts in which the instrument of imitation is language, must evidently arise entirely from association ; because it is the only principle from which words derive their force and meaning. And in these arts, sublimity precisely considered, will be found resolvable into a very few general qualities.

THE poet, or the orator, is then possessed of this excellence, when the sentiments he utters, or the subjects he professedly describes, contain in themselves the sublime, either of nature, or of the passions and character : and the grander the originals are, the greater is the sublimity of the imitation ; whence in classing sentiments that are sublime, the first place is assigned by critics, to those which have a relation to the gods \*. When Homer would convey a sublime idea of DISCORD, he gives greatness of quantity to this imaginary person, assigning her such prodigious stature, that, while

\* Ἔνοιας τοίνυν ἵναι σφιται μάλιστα μὲν ἀπεὶ θεῶν, ὡς  
περὶ θεῶν λεγόμεναι. ἘΡΜΟΓ. περὶ ιδεῶν.

while she walks upon the earth, her head reaches to the heavens :

*'Ouparū̄ iṣṇpičē xāpη, ḡ iṇī χDovī bāiver.*

IΛ. 8. ver. 443.

By the same contrivance, Virgil produces a great idea of FAME.

*Ingrediturque solo, et caput inter nubila condit.*

AEN. I. 4. ver. 177.

The sublimity of the rival sentiments of the two Latin poets, with respect to Cato, arises in like manner from the grandeur of the subject, from the dignity of the character described :

*Et cuncta terrarum subacta .*

*Præter atrocem animum Catonis.*      HOR.

*Secretosque pios, his dantem jura Catonem.*

VIRG.

On account of the superior grandeur of the subject, the latter claims an undoubted preference. The former, indeed, derives additional force from the art of the composition, by means of which the first hint of an exception from Cæsar's power occasions a suspense of thought, a kind of anxious expectation, which, mixing with the sublime sensation, heightens it. Subjects thus grand in themselves, must bestow

bestow sublimity on a composition, whenever they are described in such a manner as conveys entire, or augments, the feeling which they naturally excite.

IF an author's main subject is destitute of innate grandeur, it may be rendered grand, by comparing, or some way associating it with objects naturally such. By the same means the real greatness of a subject is increased. Hence metaphor, comparison, and imagery, are often productive of sublimity \*. Cicero exalts Cæsar's idea of clemency, by representing it as godlike †. Seneca ‡ gives a sublime idea of Cicero's genius, by comparing it with the majesty and extent of the Roman empire. The effect of the comparison is sometimes augmented, by the writer's insinuating the superiority of his subject to that with which he compares it, and artfully annexing some circumstances to the latter, which, without rendering it mean, (for that would destroy the effect of the comparison) yet depress it below the former. In this way Homer contrives to give a great idea of the Grecian army,

D                      by

\* ΔΗΜΗΤ. ΦΑΛ. πδ. πτ.

† Homines ad deos nulla re proprius accedunt, quam salute hominibus danda. *Pro Ligari.*

‡ Illud ingenium, quod solum populus Romanus par imperio suo habuit. *Controv. lib. I.*

by introducing Priam speaking magnificently of the armies which he had formerly seen in Phrygia, but at the same time acknowledging it far superior to them \*. By the same means, an Italian poet represents Venice, which he celebrates, as greater than Rome :

*Si pelago Tyberim præfers, urbem adspice u-  
tramque ;  
Illam homines dices, hanc posuisse deos.*

SANAZAR.

Venice becomes grand by the metaphorical use of *pelagus*, and by the relation which it is said to bear to the gods ; and its grandeur is increased by comparison with Rome, acknowledged great, but, at the same time, purposely degraded, by the opposition of *Tyber* to *pelagus*, and its relation to men. The power of imparting sublimity to objects which naturally have it not, by giving them a relation to others, is an advantage peculiar to the arts which imitate by language ; for the rest can

attain

\* Ήδη καὶ Φρυγίην ιστήλυθος ἀμπελόεσσαν,  
Ἐιδε τίδος πλείστης Φρύγας, ἀνέρας ἀιολοπάλης,  
Λαὸς Ὄτρηνος καὶ Μύγδονος ἀντιθέσιος,  
Οἱ δὲ τότε ιερατόνιοι παρ' ἔχθας Σαργγαρίσιοι.  
Καὶ γάρ οὐκών ιπίκερος οὐκ μετὰ τοῖσιν ἐλέχθην,  
Ηματι τῷ, ὅτε ἡλθον Ἀμαξόνες ἀντιάνειραι  
Ἄλλ' οὐδὲ οἱ τόσοι ήσαν, οὓσοι ἐλίκωπες Ἀχαίοις.

I. v. ver. 184.

attain the sublime, only by copying such objects as are themselves possessed of that quality \*.

THE principles which we have laid down explain also the sublime of music : it seems to be derived in part from the length and the gravity of the notes ; the former constituting a kind of amplitude to the ear ; the latter contributing to that composure and sedate expansion of the mind which attends the perception of sublimity : and it is then completed, when the artist, by skilfully imitating the sublime passions, or their objects, inspires these passions into his hearers, and renders them conscious of their operation.

IN order to account farther for sublimity in the works of art, we may observe, that this quality leads us to conceive the ingenuity, the skill, the abilities of the artist, and to conceive them with admiration. This admiration mixes with the sentiment produced by the qualities of the work itself, and improves and heightens

\* It is perhaps necessary to repeat, that we here intend only the sublime precisely considered ; for the term is often used to signify any great excellence of composition. It is thus defined by Longinus : ὡς ἀκρότης καὶ ιξοχή τις λύγων οἰσται τὰ οὐρανά. In this latitude he explains it, treating of the nervous, the vehement, and even the beautiful and elegant.

heightens that sentiment. This is a cause common to all the instances in which the productions of the fine arts inspire a perception of sublimity.

IT is proper to observe here, that things may be destitute of grandeur, and yet not be accounted low or mean ; but may, on the contrary, possess other qualities which gratify us highly in a different way. It is only when grandeur is requisite and expected, that the mere absence of it produces meanness. Thus a remarkable defect in quantity, in comparison with things of the same kind ; a resemblance in individuals of a superior species to the orders below them ; or the defect of sublimity in compositions of art or genius which propose to imitate originals, or treat subjects, confessedly noble, gives us distaste, and inspires contempt. Meanness arises often likewise from association, when low and groveling ideas are suggested ; as, when images and similes taken from mean objects, are applied to an important subject. Thus also, words and phrases become mean, when they excite mean ideas, either by their proper signification, or by their being used only by those of inferior rank.

S E C T.

## S E C T. III.

*Of the sense or taste of Beauty.*

**B**EAUTIFUL objects are of different kinds, and produce pleasure by means of different principles of human nature.

THE first species of beauty is that of *figure*; and belongs to objects possessed of *uniformity*, *variety*, and *proportion*. Each of these qualities pleases in some degree; but all of them united give exquisite satisfaction.

FACILITY in the conception of an object, if it be moderate, gives us pleasure: the mind thinks well of itself, when it is able to form its conception without pain or labour. This constitutes the value of perspicuity of thought and language; which is agreeable in opposition to obscurity, as this occasions an uneasy search into the meaning of the parts, or the tendency of the whole, which requires greater labour than we are willing to bestow. Hence too it is that *uniformity* and *simplicity* become agreeable. Objects endued with these qualities enter easily into the mind: they do not distract our attention, or hurry us too fast from one scene to another: each part is distinctly and strongly conceived: the view of

a part suggests the whole, and, impelling the mind to imagine the rest, produces a grateful exertion of its energy.

ACCORDINGLY, in all the beautiful works of nature, uniformity is preserved in the general appearance of the correspondent parts. And though a perfectly accurate regularity is avoided, both in natural effects and in the fine arts; yet so much of it must be retained, as to keep the variety from degenerating into perplexity and confusion. Regular figures are in general preferred to irregular; and such as have parallel sides to such as have not. Equality is requisite to the beauty of every piece of painting \*. Even when a perfect similarity in the appearance of the counterparts seems to be studiously shunned, as in a side-view of a human face, the attitude of the body, or the profile of a building; yet still it must be so contrived, that though it does not exhibit a *sensation*, it may notwithstanding, according to the rules of perspective, suggest the *idea* of exact uniformity.

\* Altera pars tabulæ vacuo ne frigida campo,  
Aut deserta siet, dum pluribus altera formis  
Fervida mole sua supremam exurgit ad oram.  
Sed tibi sic positis respondeat utraque rebus,  
Ut si aliquid sursum se parte attollat in una,  
Sic aliquid parte ex alia consurgat, et ambas  
Æquiparet, geminas cumulando æqualiter oras.

*Fresn. de art. graph. ver. 145.*

formity. To bestow simplicity upon a multitude of separate phænomena, the philosopher traces them up to common qualities, and general causes ; and it is only when he has done so, that the beauty of science begins \*.

BUT uniformity, when perfect and unmixed, is apt to pall upon the sense, to grow languid and to sink the mind into an uneasy state of indolence. It cannot therefore alone produce pleasure, either very high, or of very long duration. *Variety* is necessary to enliven it. Where this is wanting, uniformity degenerates into dull formality. Variety in some measure gratifies the sense of novelty, as our ideas vary in passing from the contemplation of one part to that of another. This transition puts the mind in action, and gives it employment, the consciousness of which is agreeable †.

## IN

\* Uniformity and simplicity are, strictly speaking, distinct ideas ; the former implying the similarity of the correspondent parts ; the latter, the fewness of unlike parts in the whole object. But as both please by the same principle, it was judged unnecessary precisely to distinguish them here.

† *Intricacy*, which often greatly contributes to beauty, may be considered as a species of *variety* ; at least, its agreeableness is derived from the same cause ; and variety is most naturally combined with uniformity, intricacy with simplicity.

IN the works of nature we find variety studiously sought after ; as in the uneven surface of the globe ; the infinity of shapes and hues in the flowers that adorn it ; the intricate windings of rivers ; the wildnesses of nature, which we even set ourselves to copy by art ; and in ten thousand other instances. To procure it, the architect enriches his buildings with ornaments of different forms. In all works of taste, too great uniformity is avoided by numberless graceful attitudes, by varying of members, and by contrasting the parts \*.

## WERE

\* *Inque figurarum cumulis non omnibus idem  
Corporis inflexus, motusque ; vel artibus omnes  
Conversis pariter non comitantur eodem ;  
Sed quædam in diversa trahant contraria membra,  
Transverseque aliis pugnant, et cætera frangant.*

*Fresu. de art. graph. ver. 137.*

So great is the power of variety in producing beauty, that an ingenious artist, who has lately *analysed* it, resolves almost the whole of it, not altogether without reason, into that principle, and defines the art of composing to be nothing else but “ the art of varying well.” He holds uniformity no further necessary, than it is requisite to convey the idea of rest or motion, without possibility of falling. But here he goes too far. It were easy to point out instances, where uniformity is studied, though it cannot have any degree of this effect : and he acknowledges that beauty resides only in a *composed* variety ; which necessarily implies a mixture of uniformity. He indeed sufficiently proves, that uniformity is not the only,

WERE the variety indeed boundless, the mind would be fatigued and pained with continual shifting from part to part, without the prospect of any end of its labour ; it would be displeased and disgusted, when it found, that, after numberless efforts to conceive the object, the endless dissimilitude and perplexed composition of the parts still baffled its endeavours, and hindered it from perfecting its idea. A certain degree of uniformity must therefore be blended with the variety of objects ; otherwise this variety, instead of producing moderate energy, would subject us to insurmountable toil, which would make our pleasure soon degenerate into pain.

THESE two qualities, by thus moderating the effects of one another, increase the pleasure resulting from each ; giving the mind at once the opposite gratifications of facility and active exertion, mixed with, and mellowing one another.

PROPORTION consists not so much in relations of the parts precisely measurable, as in a general aptitude of the structure to the end proposed : which experience enables us instantaneously

only, or the chief principle of perfect beauty. Yet it often by itself constitutes some degree of it ; as in the straight and parallel sides of a canal.

taneously to perceive, better than any artificial methods can determine it. Its influence on beauty is therefore derived from *fitness*\*, a principle which will be illustrated presently.

A very small disproportion in any of the members of the human body produces deformity. The least deviation, in the productions of the fine arts, from the natural harmony of the parts, always occasions a blemish.

THERE is another kind of *proportion*, at least not wholly dependent on utility, which is preserved in the appearances of things, when none of the parts are so small, in respect of one another, and of the whole, as to disappear through their smallness, while we contemplate the whole; and when none of them are so large, that, when we fix our view on them, we cannot distinctly perceive at the same time their relation to the whole, and to the other parts. Figures, the sides of which are very numerous, lose a great part of the beauty which would arise from this variety, by the want of proportion between the sides and the diameter. Works in the Gothic taste, crowded with minute ornaments, fall as much short of perfect beauty, by their disproportion, as by their deviation from simplicity.

As

\* See Hogarth's *Analysis of beauty*, chap. II.

As nothing gives us greater pleasure than what leads us to form a lofty conception of our own faculties, so nothing is more disagreeable than what reminds us of their imperfection. On this account it is, that the want of this kind of proportion disgusts us. It leads us to entertain a low, and consequently ungrateful, opinion of our capacity, by rendering it impossible to form one entire distinct conception of the object. The variety of its parts may amuse us, and keep us from attempting to comprehend the whole; and then, especially if it be joined with uniformity, it will yield us some degree of pleasure, and constitute an inferior and imperfect species of beauty. But still proportion is necessary for perfecting the beauty and fully gratifying a correct and improved taste.

THUS the absence of any one of these ingredients, the want either of uniformity, of variety, or of proportion, diminishes the beauty of objects: but where all of them are in a great measure wanting, deformity must prevail. Figures may be desirable or valuable on other accounts; but without these qualities they cannot be beautiful.

THERE is another cause, besides those already mentioned, which contributes greatly to render each of these qualities, uniformity, variety

riety, and proportion, agreeable, and to render the combination of them a source of high delight. It is, that they are all indications of design, wisdom, and contrivance ; qualities of mind which we never fail to survey with pleasure. When we behold uniformity in a work, we naturally conclude, that it could not be the effect of chance, and that it could scarce be formed without intention. When we behold variety in a work, we are sure that it could not proceed from undefining, and merely mechanical causes ; and are disposed to suspect at least, that it is the production of a mind. But uniformity and variety artfully blended in the same object, by excluding both chance and mechanism, put it beyond doubt, that it springs from a mind ; that design, and wisdom, and art, have been employed in uniting these opposite qualities so skilfully : we rest in the conclusion with perfect satisfaction ; we take pleasure in conceiving the excellence of the cause, and by this the delight is heightened which we find in beholding the effect that suggests that excellence. Proportion of every kind is an additional evidence of the wisdom of the cause, and indicates a higher degree of wisdom ; and therefore it is a source of further pleasure in contemplating the effect. Thus the qualities which constitute beauty of form, suggest design, and lead us to infer art and wisdom in the cause.

cause. The judgment is natural, immediate, and inevitable. We conceive this character of the cause with pleasure; and we ascribe this pleasure to the visible objects which led us to conceive, and to infer that character. This pleasure is in itself a species of admiration, and therefore akin to the sentiment of sublimity; but being occasioned by qualities in the object which produce a soft and tender sensation, it is modified by that sensation, and assumes its character; it renders it more intensely pleasant, but does not alter its nature: on the contrary, it is altered by it; it acquires that tenderness and softness which is peculiar to the perception of beauty, and which distinguishes it from the more elevated emotions of the soul.

UTILITY, or the *fitness* of things for answering their ends\*, constitutes another species of beauty, distinct from that of figure. It is of so great importance, that though convenience is sometimes, in minuter instances, sacrificed to regularity; yet a great degree of inconvenience generally destroys all the pleasure which should have arisen from the symmetry and proportion of the parts. It is the peculiar excellence

\* This, which is the principle of a distinct order of beauty, is confounded with uniformity, which is but one ingredient in that of figure, by Crousaz; *Traité du Beau*, passim.

lence of nature's works, that, at least in the noblest of them, the most perfect fitness for their respective ends is united and rendered consistent with the greatest elegance of form\*. We pay a very great regard to fitness and utility, in establishing the standard of beauty and proportion in the several kinds. And, though the most perfect art falls infinitely short of nature, in combining the useful with the regular; yet none of its productions is reckoned a masterpiece, in which these excellencies do not meet †; and to obtain utility, forms of inferior beauty are, for particular purposes, constantly preferred, even where beauty is far from being neglected. The cube, not any of the more varied polygons, is chosen for a pedestal, on account of its stability. Utility has determined, though with considerable latitude, the dimensions and general form of most instruments and works, without adhering to which, the greatest profusion of ornament cannot render them beautiful in the kind. Unfitness renders ornaments displeasing when wrong applied, which, in their proper place, might be truly elegant. The splendor of a single figure in history-painting

\* In plerisque rebus incredibiliter hoc natura est ipsa fabricata, —— ut ea quæ maximam utilitatem in se continerent, eadem haberent plurimum, vel dignitatis, vel sœpe etiam venustatis. *Cic. de Orat. lib. 3.*

† Cic. ibid. ΣΕΝΟΦ. Απομνη. βιτ. γ'.

ing will but augment its faultiness, if it takes off the eye from what ought to be the principal, and obstructs the effect which should be produced by the whole. In composition, the most refined reflections, the most elaborate descriptions, the warmest pathos, displease, if they break the unity, if they do not promote, much more if they retard the main design, to which all the parts should be subordinate.

*Sed nunc non erat his locus*—————

The impropriety of their position wholly defaces their intrinsic beauty. In general, it is from the end and design of works of genius that their peculiar rules must be deduced : this directs the author in the choice, disposition, and embellishment of the parts : and by this the critic must regulate his judgment. It is from the relation which they bear to different ends, that narration, poetry, and eloquence, are subject to very different laws : and from the same source is derived the diversity of the rules belonging to the subordinate branches of each. Could fitness be dispensed with, a collection of fine sentiments and figures cloathed in agreeable language, might fully gratify our taste, however unconnected they were with one another.

THAT we may comprehend the nature of that pleasure which is produced by fitness, it  
must

must be observed, that, whenever we discover in effects a greater degree of uniformity, or well adapted complication, than could be expected from the laws of chance ; especially when we recognise a fitness for answering an important end ; we then infer, not only intention, but art and skill in the cause : which implying mental excellence and perfection, the view of it gives a noble satisfaction ; as, on the other hand, faultiness of contrivance, by suggesting imperfect skill, and want of genius, displeases us greatly. When therefore we see a work, it leads us by a natural association to conceive its end ; prone to comparison, we examine the propriety of the parts in relation to this end ; if any of them are prejudicial to it, we are disgusted with the want of skill which this imperfection betrays. Further, we dwell in imagination on the inconveniences which must arise from the unfitness of the structure ; we form strong ideas of them, which produce almost the same uneasy sentiments and passions as if we actually experienced them ; and by this mean they often obliterate all the pleasing impressions which the other qualities of the object might have caused. But when, on examination, the fitness of all the parts appears, the satisfaction with which we think on the skill and ingenuity thus displayed, communicates itself to the effect so closely connected with

with it by causation ; and, besides, we sympathetically enter into a strong feeling of the delight which must attend the possession or use of what is so well designed and executed.

THE beauty of *colours* is entirely distinct from both the former, and pleases us from principles wholly different. Colours being nothing else but various degrees and modifications of light, some of them are less hurtful to the organs of sight than others ; and are, on that account, in some instances approved as beautiful.

SOME colours again, by their *splendor*, afford a lively and vigorous sensation, which gratifies us, by producing a cheerful and vivacious disposition of mind in contemplating them.

BUT the beauty of colours is, in most instances, resolvable into *association* ; those being approved, which, either by a natural resemblance, or by custom, or opinion, introduce and are connected with agreeable ideas of any sort ; and those being disapproved, which have any way become related to disagreeable ones. The verdure of the fields is delightful, not only by being inoffensive to the eye, but chiefly by its suggesting the pleasant idea

idea of fertility. Heath in bloom would form a carpet agreeable enough to sight, if we could separate from its appearance the idea of the barrenness of the mountains and wilds which it covers. In dress, colours are either beautiful or the contrary, according to the nature of the idea which they lead us to form of the station, sentiments, and character of the wearer.

IN some cases, a particular dress, in consequence of established manners, suggests to the generality nearly the same idea. Where-ever this *general* connection takes place, it forms a kind of standard in dress, for persons in certain stations or professions. We come to perceive a propriety in conforming to it ; and we are displeased with the indecency of deviating remarkably from it.

WHEN the idea suggested by dress is different in different persons, so also is the relish for the colour ; what suggests to one a liveliness and vivacity of turn, gives another the idea of gaudiness and levity ; the same dress may convey to some the idea of gravity and sedateness, to others that of dullness and austerity.

COLOURS as applied in painting, come under consideration here only in respect of their delicacy

delicacy and vivacity; which, however estimable, are not yet of so great importance, as the power they have of representing grandeur, or beauty of figure, or of exhibiting solid bodies, by such an artful and ingenious imitation, as itself delights us in a way hereafter to be explained.

THE beauty of colours may be heightened by the addition of *variety*; a circumstance which bestows some charms on the most irregular mixture of them, provided they be of themselves agreeable; especially if they be so disposed as to set off to advantage the separate brightness or beauty of each other.

THERE is perhaps no term used in a looser sense than *beauty*, which is applied to almost every thing that pleases us. Though this usage is doubtless too indefinite, we may, without a faulty deviation from precision, apply this epithet to every pleasure which is conveyed by the eye, and which has not got a proper and peculiar name; to the pleasure we receive, either when an object of sight suggests pleasant ideas of other senses, or when the ideas suggested are agreeable ones formed from the sensations of sight, or when both these circumstances concur. In all these cases, beauty is, at least in part, resolvable into association.

THE

THE first method of effecting beauty, we have already seen exemplified in colours, which are themselves objects of sight introducing pleasant ideas not derived from sight. Thus also the structure of a human face often indicates good mental dispositions, which are not only themselves approved as virtuous, but, by being approved, diffuse a beauty over the countenance in which they are imprinted : but bad affections, expressed in the look, throw deformity upon the finest features.

IN the second way is produced the only beauty of thought or sentiment which comes properly under the present head ; that beauty which arises, when the subject described is agreeable to sight, as light, flowers, fields, meadows, groves ; or when it is illustrated by images from things that are in this manner agreeable. This is one great part of the beauty of pastoral, and enters in some degree into every kind of poetry \*.

To the third cause, or the union of both the former, imitations of *beautiful* originals by figure and colour, owe their beauty. It is observable, that the arts which use these instruments

\* The other qualities which render sentiments beautiful or agreeable, as metaphor, fable, antithesis, morality, elevation, &c. belong to other classes.

struments have greater advantages for imitating beauty than they have for imitating sublimity. This they can represent, as we have seen, only by suggesting *ideas* of grand objects; but the copies would not, if considered as originals, be grand; since they are almost ever destitute of magnitude, its most essential requisite. But imitations of beautiful originals, independent of their resemblance to these, are beautiful; since they cannot otherwise exhibit the beauties of the originals to the thought, than by their possessing them in some degree: and often they possess them as perfectly as their archetypes. A statue has the same regularity and proportion as its original. A painting may equal the object which it represents, not only in symmetry and propriety, but in colour.

THE classes of beauty which we have been explaining, are distinct in their principles, though, by reason of the similitude of their feelings, they are reduced to the same *genus*. But they are often in things, variously united, and by their union, they render our satisfaction more intense. In a fine face all the principles of beauty are combined. To an exact symmetry and regular proportion of varied features, and parts nicely adapted to their several purposes, is superadded complexion, composed of white and red, colours beautiful in themselves,

themselves, rendered still more so, by the artful manner in which they are disposed, and by their indicating health and freshness ; and the grace of the whole is heightened by a quick expressiveness of aspect, which forces us instantaneously to perceive acuteness, sagacity, sedateness, sweetness, or the like amiable qualities, in the mind which animates the elegant form ; while the approbation attending this perception is reflected back upon the face which gave occasion to it.

5 E C T.

## S E C T. IV.

*Of the sense or taste of Imitation.*

**E**XACTNESS and liveliness of imagination supply us with another pleasure of taste, which, as it has no peculiar name, is commonly expressed by that of beauty ; and is by some termed *relative* or *secondary*, to distinguish it from the kinds above explained, which are called *absolute* or *primary* \*. We have a natural sense which is highly gratified by a designed resemblance, though there be nothing agreeable in the original. Similitude is a very powerful principle of association, which, by continually connecting the ideas in which it is found, and leading our thoughts from one of them to the other, produces in mankind a strong tendency to comparison. As comparison implies in the very act a gentle exertion of the mind, it is on that account agreeable. As a farther energy is requisite for discovering the original by the copy ; and as this discovery gratifies curiosity, produces an agreeable consciousness of our own discernment and sagacity, and includes the pleasant feeling of success ; the recognising resemblance, in consequence of comparison, augments

\* See Hutcheson's Inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue. Treat. I. sect. 4.

ments our pleasure \*. And when an imitation is intended, our admiration of the skill and ingenuity of the artist diffuses itself over the effect from which that skill is inferred, and completes the delight which the work inspires.

HENCE the rapture with which a connoisseur beholds the capital performances of the eminent masters in painting or sculpture. Hence the main excellence of poetical or eloquent descriptions ; the characteristical perfection of which arises from the author's judiciously selecting the most essential and striking qualities of his subject, and combining them into such a picture as quickly raises in the reader, and strongly impresses on his mind, a lively idea of the original. The fundamental beauty of metaphor and allegory lies in their insinuating the analogies of things ; that of similitude and comparison, in their more explicitly proposing these analogies. By this they communicate fineness to a sentiment. Most of the figures and tropes of eloquence derive their grace from their being so employed, as to correspond with the natural expressions, or the objects, of those passions and sentiments which actuate the orator, or which he would inspire into

\* Διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρει τὰς οἰκότας ὁρᾶσσες, ὅτι συμβαῖται θεωροῦσσες μαθάνται καὶ συλλογίζονται, τι ἔχειν. ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤ. περὶ Ποιητικῆς, κιφ. δ.

into his audience. Improbability, which is a want of resemblance to natural things, always renders a fable or story less entertaining ; and if the improbability be very great, or extend to the material parts, it often makes it wholly nauseous.

WHEN excellent originals are imitated, the copies derive their charms, not merely from exactness of imitation, but also from the excellence which they represent ; and the gratification which these copies afford, may almost as properly be ascribed to beauty or sublimity as to imitation. As the beauty here is complicated in its principles, it will of consequence be also compounded in its effect, and will ravish the mind much more than either of its constituents alone. An Herculus, exhibiting proportion, strength, and fortitude, in perfection, must be a finer statue than the exactest imitation of a Thersites or Silenus. The works of Polygnotus, which represented beautiful objects, were doubtless more delightful than the pictures of Dionysius or Pauson\*, however skilfully they might represent ordinary or faulty objects. The ancient Greek, or the modern Italian painters, will always be preferable to the Flemish ; who, though they

G imitate

\* Πολύγνως μὲν κρίτους, Παύσων δὲ χειρός, Διονύσος, δὲ ὄμοίους εἶχε. 'ΑΡΙΣΤΟΣ. περὶ Ποιητῶν καὶ φ. β'.

imitate *well*, do not make a judicious *choice* of such beauties of nature as deserve to be imitated \*. The Margites of Homer could not have given us so high entertainment as we receive from the Iliad. A comparison, however nicely suited to the subject, will please still more, if it be taken from what conveys no ideas but such as are noble and agreeable: and indeed, by suggesting such as are strongly the reverse, it will be sufficient to turn the most magnificent subject into ridicule.

BUT still the force of imitation is most conspicuous, when no other principles concur to heighten its effect: for as it is then pure and unmixed, we cannot question, that the whole pleasure of the sentiment produced, is owing to

\* In this particular the ancient artists were so careful, that they were not contented with imitating the most perfect *individuals* they could meet with; but collecting the perfections of many, they formed one *general* idea more complete than could be drawn from any single real existence. "Οὐπερ τεύπον καὶ τοῖς τὰ ἀγάλματα τέλοις διαπλάτονοι οἱ πᾶν τὸ παρ' εἰκάσοις καλὸν συναγάγοντες, καλά τὴν τέχνην οἱ διαφύγων σωμάτεος ἀθρίστατες, εἰς μίμησις μίαν, καλλος ἐν ἵγιες καὶ ἄριστος καὶ ἡρμοσμένον αὐτῷ ἀνὴρ εἰργάσασθο. καὶ ὡς ἀν ἱνοῖς σῶμα ἀκριβεῖς καλὰ ἀλήθευτα ἀγάλματα ὄμοιον. ΜΑΞ. ΤΥΡ. λογ. §'. Καὶ μὴ τά γε καλὰ εἰδη ἀφομοεῖντες, ιποδῆ ἐρέδιοι οὐδὲ ἀνθρόπηπερισυχεῖν ἀμεμπτειώντας ἔχοντι, οἱ πολλῶν συνάγοντες τὰ οἴκικάσι καλλιστα, οὕτως ὅλα τὰ σώματα καλὰ ποτεῖται φάνεται. ΣΕΝΟΦ. Απομνημ. βιβ. γ'.

to it alone. Its power is indeed so great, that it not only, without the assistance of other principles, produces a considerable degree of pleasure ; but often recommends imperfect or faulty originals to the imitation of the artist, and makes him even give them the preference to others ; and renders things grateful when reflected by it, which would be very ungrateful if viewed directly. The rudest rocks and mountains ; the objects that in nature are most deformed ; even disease and pain, acquire beauty when skilfully imitated in painting \*. It is chiefly by copying imperfections and absurdities that mimicry and humour please. A perfect imitation of characters morally evil, can make us dwell with pleasure on them, notwithstanding the uneasy sentiments of disapprobation and abhorrence which they excite. The character of Iago is detestable, but we admire Shakespear's representation of it. Nay, imperfect and mixt characters are, in all kinds of writing, preferred to faultless ones, as being juster copies of real nature. The pleasant sensation resulting from the imitation is so intense, that it overpowers and converts into delight even the *uneasy* impressions which spring from the objects imitated. There can be no stronger

\* "Α γὰρ ἀνὴλα λυπηρῶς ὁρᾶμεν, τέλοιν τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἕκριθωμένας, χάιρομεν θεωρεῖσθε· οἵοι θηρίων το μορφαὶ τῶν ἀγριολάτων καὶ πειρῶν. ΑΡΙΣΤ. περὶ Ποιητ. καθ. 3.

er proof of the force of imitation in conferring on its effects the power of pleasing, than its rendering those passions agreeable, when excited by it, which, when produced in the natural way, are pure and unmixed pain. Suspense, anxiety, terror, when produced in tragedy, by imitation of their objects and causes, and infused by sympathy, afford not only a more serious, but a much intenser and nobler satisfaction, than all the laughter and joy which farce or comedy can inspire. When thus secondarily produced, they agitate and employ the mind, and rouse and give scope to its greatest activity; while, at the same time, our implicit knowledge that the occasion is remote or fictitious, enables the pleasure of imitation to relieve the pure torment which would attend their primary operation.

FROM what has been said, it is obvious, that the pleasure of imitation arises from a combination of causes. Besides the act of comparison, which is the same in all instances, the exactness of the resemblance, our discovery of it, and the art we conceive necessary for producing it, concur to make up our gratification.

EXACTNESS of resemblance is scarce farther approved, than as it evidences skill, and enables us to discover the original. Caravaggio  
is

is censurable for too closely following the life, as well as Gioseppino for wantonly deviating from it into fantastical extravagances. Among the ancient statuaries likewise, Demetrius is censured for being too studious of likeness, and sacrificing beauty to it; and is on this account reckoned inferior to Lysippus and Praxiteles, who, at the same time that they excelled in producing likeness, carried it no farther than was consistent with beauty \*. Exactness of resemblance may be carried so far in any work of genius, as to degenerate into disagreeable servility; and is easily dispensed with when the deviation from similitude appears to be the result of superior art. However, that instrument of imitation is doubtless the most perfect, which is capable of producing the most perfect likeness. Among the fine arts, this pre-eminence, in most subjects, belongs to sculpture; and more to painting, in subjects perfectly adapted to it, than to poetry.

BUT even the imperfection of the instrument of imitation may sometimes add merit to the effect. Though it renders the resemblance less accurate, this very circumstance  
enhances

\* Ad veritatem Lysippum et Praxitelem accessisse optimè affirmant. Nam Demetrius tanquam nimius in ea reprehenditur, et fuit similitudinis quam pulchritudinis amantior. *Quint. Instit. Orat. lib. 12. cap. 10.*

inhances the pleasure, by producing a consciousness of greater sagacity in discovering the original ; at the same time that the production of likeness with unapt materials, implying greater difficulty, gives rise to an higher approbation of the ingenuity of the artist. In this respect painting is more artificial than statuary. For that reason a fine picture will inspire full as great pleasure as a statue. Its representing solid bodies, only by the disposition of light and shade, though itself a plane, is a proof of the highest skill. Could a person be formed to delicacy of taste, and yet kept from seeing a picture till he were adult, it is scarce conceivable what rapture he should feel, when he first discovered it to be but a plane variously shaded, after having firmly believed, that, like the objects to which he had been accustomed, it had itself the prominences and cavities which it represents \*. And as every difficulty of execution heightens our idea of the skill by which it is surmounted, not only the  
*importance*

\* Hence, in the celebrated contest between a painter and a statuary, concerning the merit of their arts, both argued from real principles of excellence ; the statuary pleading the perfection of resemblance in his art ; the painter the superior ingenuity which his discovered. The blind man gave the preference to the latter. The controversy cannot be determined, till it is previously fixed, which principle is, on the whole, preferable, exactness of resemblance, or skill in imitating.

*importance* of the work, but also the *difficulty* of representing passion and character by figure and colour, increase the beauty of history-painting. In this view, poetry, imitating by instituted symbols, nowise resembling things, is, on most subjects, more imperfectly mimetic than the other arts: but this imperfection gives it a kind of merit, as that art is able, notwithstanding, to suggest very lively ideas of its objects. But what constitutes its unquestionable superiority to all its sister-arts, is its peculiar and unrivalled power of imitating the noblest and most important of all subjects, the calmest sentiments of the heart, and human characters displayed in a long series of conduct. For, in determining the comparative merit of the imitative arts, we must not only estimate the excellencies of the *instruments* or *manners* of imitation which they respectively claim; but also the moment of what they imitate, and the value of the *ends* to which they are adapted \*.

## S E C T.

\* All this must be taken under consideration, in order to explain the nature of any one of the fine arts: and it is only after the nature of each has been unfolded, that we can judge of their relative importance. Διαφέρουσι δὲ ἀλλήλων τείσιν οὐ γάρ τὸ γένος οὐδέποτε μημεῖδαι, οὐ τὸ ἵτορα. οὐ τὸ οἰλίων, καὶ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον. ἈΡΙΣΤ. περὶ Ποιητ. καθ. 4.

## S E C T. V.

*Of the sense or taste of Harmony.*

THE sense of harmony, which enables us to perceive a kind of beauty in sound, not only is conversant in all the arts which employ language, but itself lays the sole foundation of the art of music. By it the ear derives from its objects a pleasure similar to what the eye receives from forms. This pleasure is resolvable into the agreeableness of *single* sounds, and into the charms and energy of a skilful *complication* of them.

SINGLE sounds are either loud or low, acute or grave, slender or full, even or broken. To these qualities attention must be paid, if we would please the ear. If sounds are too *low*, they do not strike with force enough to gratify: if too *loud*, they confound us. Great *acuteness* lacerates the organ: and an excess of *gravity* renders the impression too dull and spiritless to please. *Exility* hinders sound from sufficiently filling the ear, and thence is attended with a perception of meanness and futility: but *full* and swelling notes, by occupying its whole expansion, acquire grandeur, and inspire delight. *Broken* sounds grate the ear, by their harsh inequalities: *smoothness*

*smoothness* and evenness is necessary to prevent their being disagreeable.

HARMONY presupposes the agreeableness of the separate notes, but it is produced only by a *combination* of sounds. The different compositions of articulate sounds, added to the separate qualities of each, render some words harmonious, others harsh. Some articulate sounds do not easily concur; the transition from one configuration of the organs of speech to the other, is difficult and uneasy; and the hearer is led, by a delicate sympathy with the speaker, to feel this pain and labour. It is the frequency of such combinations that prevents euphony in any tongue; and renders some languages less smooth and harmonious than others. In sentences, periods, and discourses, the harmony, or the asperity, of style arises from the repetition of sounds and combinations separately agreeable or disagreeable: and the harmony is rendered more delightful, by the *variety* which the length of the composition admits. The importance of variety we shall acknowledge, if we but reflect how tiresome sameness of cadence is. The superior harmony of poetry is produced by the greater facility of its combinations, joined to a considerable degree of *uniformity*, and a regular *proportion* in time; the proper method of obtaining

H

which,

which, in every language, determines its prosody: and the variety of the means to be employed for this end in different languages introduces a similar variety in the genius and measure of their verse.

WHENEVER our pleasure arises from a succession of sounds, it is a perception of a complicated nature; made up of a *sensation* of the present sound or note, and an *idea* or remembrance of the foregoing, which, by their mixture and concurrence, produce such a mysterious delight, as neither could have produced alone. It is often heightened, likewise, by an *anticipation* of the succeeding notes. Hence it proceeds in part that we are in general best pleased with pieces of music which we are acquainted with; our understanding them more thoroughly counterbalances the power of novelty. Hence too it is, that we often acquire in time a fondness for what at first we did not highly relish; the anticipation which repetition enables us to make of the succeeding note, supplying the defect in the sensation of the present, and the idea of the past sound, when disunited from it, cementing them, as it were, and making them run into one another without difficulty or harshness. Sense, memory, and imagination, are thus conjunctively employed, in exhibiting to the interior organ

a succession of sounds, which, properly disposed, especially in music, fill us with exquisite delight.

IT is observable, that the proper and pleasing disposition of sounds in *melody* bears a great resemblance, in its principles, to that arrangement of parts which constitutes the beauty of forms. It is a succession of notes, bearing to one another a regular *proportion* in time; so *varied* in their lengths and intervals \*, as to relieve satiety and tediousness; and at the same time so far *uniform*, that the transitions are all in themselves agreeable, such as are taken in by the ear with ease, and are subordinate to the key which governs the whole.

THE same principles are not less obvious in *harmony*; the superior delight of which springs from no other cause, but its possessing some of these qualities in greater perfection. The *uniformity*, is preserved almost undiminished; the different parts being so combined, that no dissonance is occasioned by their multiplicity; but the concordant notes, melted into one another, strike the ear together without confusion

\* As the great force of *proportion* in time is evident from the universal attention that is paid to it in music of every kind; so the influence of *variety* of time appears particularly in the drum, the whole music of which is owing to it alone.

sion or distraction. With this simplicity, an immense *variety* is made consistent; each separate part being a distinct series of artfully varied sounds; the melody of all the parts being enjoyed at once; the vibrations of the concords coinciding, not always, but at regular periods; the diversity of the concords and their successions producing a great diversity of harmonies; and the judicious intermixture of discords preventing the sense from being cloyed with symphony too long continued. At the same time, the *proportion* is rendered more conspicuous and artful, by its being preserved in all the parts; and a new kind of it is introduced by their comparative strength. So great is the efficacy of these principles, that they alone produce very high pleasure, though no passion be excited by the music.

BUT still the chief excellence of music lies in its *expression*. By this quality, music is applied to a determinate subject: by this it acquires a fitness, becomes adapted to an end, and agitates the soul with whatever passion the artist chuses\*. Its power to operate on the passions

\* Hence different kinds of music may, in a consistence with their being all agreeable, answer different and even opposite purposes. Καλὸς μὲν ἐστὶ πολέμῳ τὸ ὄρθιον, καὶ λόγῳ δὲ συμποσίῳ τὸ παράνον· καὶ καλὸς μὲν λακωδαιμονίῳ τὸ ἴψεπτήριον, καλὸς δὲ Αθηναίοις τὸ κύκλιον· καὶ καλὸς μὲν ἐ

passions is its most important virtue. And indeed, as all sensations and emotions resembling in their feeling, tend to introduce each other into the mind : music, producing by its harmony a pleasant disposition of soul, renders us peculiarly prone to every agreeable affection. But it makes use too of other instruments. By the natural fitness of sound for accomplishing an imitation of, or association with, their objects and natural expressions, it infuses into the breast passions correspondent ; settles into calm serenity, melts into tenderness or pity, sinks into sorrow, sooths into melancholy, agitates with terror, elevates with joy, excites to courage, or enraptures with devotion ; and thus inexpressibly delights the soul.

διάξεις τὸ ἱγχελουσικόν, καλὸς δὲ οὐ φυγῆ τὸ ἀτακλωτικόν.  
‘ΗΔΕΙΑ μὲν πασα μοῦσα, ἀλλὰ τὸ τῆς ΧΡΕΙΑΣ ἐχ ὄμοιον  
πᾶσιν. ΜΑΕ. ΤΥΡ. λογ. §’.

## S E C T. VI.

*Of the sense or taste of Ridicule.*

**I**N our enumeration of the simple powers which constitute taste, we must not omit that sense which perceives, and is gratified by the odd, the ridiculous, the humorous, the witty ; and whose gratification often produces, and always tends to, mirth, laughter, and amusement. Though inferior in dignity to the rest, it is far from being despicable. It has a province, less important indeed than that of the others, yet both useful and agreeable. As they judge of grave and momentous subjects, it claims the sole jurisdiction over such as are more ludicrous.

Its object is in general *incongruity*, or a surprising and uncommon mixture of *relation* and *contrariety* in things. More explicitly ; it is gratified by an *inconsistence* and *dissonance* of circumstances in the *same* object ; or in objects nearly *related* in the main ; or by a *similitude* or *relation* unexpected between things on the whole *opposite* and *unlike*.

JARRING and incongruous circumstances meeting in the same subject, form an absurdity, with which we are apt to be diverted. Such are,

are, cowardice in a boaster; ignorance in a man, of what he ought or pretends to know; dignity of any kind blended with meanness; sentiments or style in composition unsuitable to the subject. We are disposed to combine the parts of things into a whole, and to bestow upon them unity and intimate relation; we expect that they should be all consistent, suitable, and of a piece; and when we find them otherwise, we pronounce them ridiculous and absurd.

WE compare in this light the qualities, not only of the same subject, but also of subjects resembling, or otherwise nearly connected; and their contrariety affects us with a similar sensation. An opposition of characters and behaviour in different persons, especially of the same family or profession, often forms a diverting contrast. A passion, intense in its feeling, excited by a trifling cause, moves our laughter. A glaring disproportion betwixt the means and the end, when the means are either unequal to its attainment, or too laborious and expensive for its importance, is on the same principle ridiculous.

So excursive is the human fancy, that it continually leads us to compare things the most dissimilar; and as, on the former comparisons,

parisons, the appearance of incongruity, so, on this, the discovery of unlooked-for likenesses, analogies, and relations, proves a source of pleasure and amusement. Inferior animals provoke our mirth, whenever they mimic the actions or sagacity of human creatures.

OBJECTS conceived to be in any of these ways incongruous, always gratify the sense of ridicule : but they may excite, at the same time, a more important feeling, which, by occupying the mind, prevents our attending to the incongruity, or extinguishes the sentiment thence resulting, as soon as it begins to rise. Enormous vice, though of all things the most incongruous to the natural system of our minds, is never esteemed ridiculous \*. Pain or misery is never in itself ridiculous ; it can become such only by being accidentally connected with unsuitable circumstances, and by failing to excite pity so intense as may swallow up the ludicrous sensation.

*WIT, humour and ridicule* †, are skilful imitations

\* Nec insignis improbitas, et scelere juncta, nec rursus miseria insignis agitata ridetur : facinorosos majore quādam vi, quam ridiculi, vulnerari volunt ; miseros illudi nolunt, nisi se forte jactant. *Cic. de Orat. lib. 2.*

† The author is well aware, that these three modes  
of

tations of odd and incongruous originals; which please us, not only by shewing them often more perfectly than we could have ourselves observed them, but also by superadding the gratification which results from imitation. This gratification is in its own nature serious, but is altered by the sentiment which attends the objects imitated, and only serves to heighten the contempt or amusement which they produce.

IN all these modes of imitation, the incongruity of the object, in itself, or in respect of the imagery used for illustrating it, is obvious. When Butler represents all ranks as intent on reforming the church and the state, he employs a surprising complication of wit and humour, in order to ridicule the epidemical distraction. There is a wonderful mixture of dissonance and relation; *dissonance*, between

of imitation are widely different. It would be a very curious work to ascertain the peculiar nature of each, and to mark its real distinction from the rest. But, as the subject is in a great measure new, it could not be examined with accuracy, or so as to produce conviction of the justness of the theory, in a very narrow compass. And a large disquisition would be more than falls to its share in an inquiry concerning taste in general. It was therefore judged proper to be contented with pointing out what is common to wit, humour, and ridicule; and with giving examples which show that the theory here established extends to all of them.

the ordinary occupations of low mechanics and the difficult and noble office of legislation and political government; *relation*, not only as the persons thus inconsistently employed are the same, but also as their demands of redress are generally expressed in language adapted to the style of their respective vocations \*. The description of Hudibras's learning becomes witty, by the strange contrast between the dignity of the sciences ascribed to him, and the proofs of his understanding them, drawn from the lowest instances †. A hose used for a cupboard, the basket-hilt of a sword

for

\* Then tinkers baul'd aloud to settle  
Church-discipline, for patching kettle, &c.  
Botchers left old cloaths in the lurch,  
And sell to turn and patch the church, &c.  
And some for old suits, coats, or cloak ;  
No surplices nor service-book.

*Hudib. part I. cant. 2. ver. 536. &c.*

† He was in logic a great critic,  
Profoundly skill'd in analytic, &c.  
He'd undertake to prove by force  
Of argument a man's no horse ;  
He'd prove a buzzard is no fowl,  
And that a lord may be an owl ;  
A calf an alderman, a goose a justice,  
And rooks committee-men and trustees, &c.

*Cant. I. ver. 65*

For rhetoric, he could not ope  
His mouth, but out there flew a trope, &c.

*Ver. 81. &c.*

In mathematics he was greater, &c. ver. 119.—188.

for holding broth, a dagger for cleaning shoes, or toasting cheese to bait a mouse-trap, present ideas strikingly heterogeneous \*. A sword and a dagger are so unlike to a knight-errant and his dwarf; a restive horse to an unmanageable body-politic; courage whetted by martial music, to ale turned sour by thunder; the dawning of the day to the change of colour in boiling a lobster; torn breeches to a leaky vessel; that, when they are brought into view at once by comparison, metaphor, insinuation, or allusion, their unexpected similitude in some circumstances produces mirth †. In Addison's

\* When of his hose we come to treat,  
The cupboard where he kept his meat, *ver. 303.*  
His puissant sword unto his side,  
Near his undaunted heart was tied,  
With basket-hilt that would hold broth,  
And serve for fight and dinner both, *ver. 351.*  
When it had stabb'd or broke a head,  
It would scrape trenchers, or chip bread,  
Toast cheese or bacon, though it were  
To bait a mouse-trap, 'twould not care.  
'Twould make clean shoes, and in the earth  
Set leeks and onions, and so forth. *ver. 381.*

† This sword a dagger had his page,  
That was but little for his age:  
And therefore waited on him so,  
As dwarfs upon Knights-errant do. *ver. 375. 920. 931.*  
Instead of trumpet and of drum,  
Which makes the warrior's stomach come,

Whose

son's humorous representation of Tinsel's terror, it is the oddity and preposterous nature of the passion that diverts us ; it is contrary to his professed principles and pretended fortitude, and it rises to a violent panic on a trifling occasion \*. When Swift ridicules human foibles, whether he makes the attack by wit, or by humour, he paints their incongruity and absurdity. Attempts to produce learned volumes by the motions of a mechanical engine ; to extract sunbeams from a cucumber ; to build houses downward from the roof ; to improve cobwebs into silk ; to soften marble for pillows and pincushions ; to propagate a breed of naked sheep ; are palpably impossible or useless, or both at once †.

## S E C T.

Whose noise whets valour sharp, like beer  
 By thunder turn'd to vinegar. *Cant. 2. ver. 107.*  
 The sun had long since in the lap  
 Of Thetis taken out his nap,  
 And like a lobster boil'd, the morn  
 From black to red began to turn.

*Part 2. cant. 2. ver. 29.*

My Galligaskins that have long withstand'd  
 The winter's fury and incroaching frosts,  
 By time subdu'd, (what will not time subdue !)  
 An horrid chasm disclose, &c.  
 Thus a well-fraught ship, &c.

*Splendid shilling.*

\* The Drummer.

† Gulliver's Travels.

## S E C T. VII.

*Of the sense or taste of Virtue.*

THE moral sense is not only itself a taste of a superior order, by which, in characters and conduct, we distinguish between the right and the wrong, the excellent and the faulty ; but it also spreads its influence over all the most considerable works of art and genius. It is never unregarded in serious performances, and it enters even into the most ludicrous. It claims a *joint authority* with the other principles of taste ; it requires an attachment to morality in the epos and the drama, and it pronounces the quickest flights of wit, without it, phrensy and distraction. Something moral has insinuated itself, not only into the serious designs of Raphael, but also into the humorous representations of Hogarth.

NAY our moral sense claims authority *superior* to all the rest. It renders morality the chief requisite ; and where this is in any degree violated, no other qualities can atone for the transgression. Particular beauties may be approved, but the work is, on the whole, condemned.

How great a part of the sentiments produced by works of genius, arises from the exertion

exertion of this sense, approving or condemning, is too obvious to require our dwelling on it. The noblest and most delightful subjects of imitation are affections, characters, and actions : and their peculiar merit arises almost entirely from their continually employing the moral faculty. By its approbation, more effectually than by any other means, we become interested for some of the persons represented, and sympathise with every change in their condition. It fills us with joyful approbation of the virtuous character, and with abhorrence, not ungrateful when thus excited of the vicious. When prosperity and success attend the virtuous man, we feel his good desert, we rejoice to find it meet its due reward, we are composed into delightful serenity, complacence, and affiance in righteous providence : when he is sunk into disappointment and adversity, we are sensible that he deserved it not, and taste the pleasurable pain of compassion for his suffering, and virtuous resentment against the authors of them. When the vicious man is prosperous, we glow with indignation, we feel a kind of melancholy despondence : when he suffers, we become sensible to the danger of vice, to the terrors of guilt ; we allow his ill desert, but mix pity with our blame. We are thus agitated by those most important passions, the infusion of which

which constitutes the highest entertainment that works of taste can give.

BUT what extensive influence the moral sense has on taste of every kind, it will be unnecessary particularly to describe, if we only recollect the various perceptions which it conveys. To it belongs our perception of the fairness, beauty, and loveliness of virtue ; of the ugliness, deformity, and hatefulness of vice ; produced by the native qualities of each considered simply. From it is derived our perception of decency, fitness and congruity in the former ; of incongruity, indecency, and unfitness in the latter ; which arises from implicit comparison of them with the structure and constitution of the mind. By it we perceive that virtue is obligatory, right, and due ; and that vice is undue, unlawful and wrong : the perception springs from the supremacy of our approving and disapproving faculty, as our internal governor prescribing a law of life. The same sense conveys a perception of merit or good desert in virtue ; of demerit or ill desert in vice ; a perception which never fails to be excited when we think at once of moral and natural good or evil. From this variety of sensations arise all the reflex passions which regard good or bad men as their objects. How much these sentiments and affections enter into the

the perceptions of taste, the least reflection will inform us.

THUS much may suffice for an analysis of taste into those simple powers of human nature which are its principles. There are qualities in things, determinate and stable, independent of humour or caprice, that are fit to operate on mental principles common to all men, and, by operating on them, are naturally productive of the sentiments of taste in all its forms. If, in any particular instance, they prove ineffectual, it is to be ascribed to some weakness or disorder in the person who remains unmoved when these qualities are exhibited to his view. Men are, with *few* exceptions, affected by the qualities we have investigated: but these qualities themselves are, without *any* exception, the constituents of excellence or faultiness in the several kinds. What is necessary for perceiving them with perfect relish, we shall next examine.

P A R T.

## P A R T II.

The formation of Taste by the union  
and improvement of its simple Prin-  
ciples.

## S E C T. I.

*Of the union of the Internal Senses, and the as-  
sistance they receive from delicacy of Passion.*

**A**NY one of the internal senses, existing in vigour and perfection, forms a particular species of taste, and enables a man to judge in some one subject of art or genius : but *all* of them must at once be vigorous, in order to constitute taste in its just extent. This *union* is necessary, not only for giving it a proper compass, but also for perfecting each of its exertions.

OUR sentiments and emotions receive an immense addition of strength from their reciprocal influence on one another. Concomitant emotions, related by their feeling, their direction, or their objects, or even without any relation existing in the mind together, run into one, and by their mixture produce

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an intense sensation. Hence different gratifications, either of the same or diverse senses, occurring to the mind at once, give it a complicated joy. The stillness and serenity of a summer morning, the sweet fragrance of flowers, the music of birds, and a thousand other agreeable circumstances, are, even commonly, observed to bestow extraordinary force on the grandeur or beauty of rural scenes.

THOUGH each object of taste has some *leading* character, by which it is peculiarly fitted to produce one *principal* sensation, it may, at the same time, by its *subordinate* qualities, produce *attendant* feelings, which will render the principal one higher and more intense, by their conspiring with it. But if the principles of taste adapted to these, be weak or deficient, we not only lose entirely *some* of the pleasures which the object might convey, but cannot even enjoy *any* of them with perfect relish, as we are insensible to the heightenings which each receives from its connexion with the rest.

NONE of our sensations is more able to support itself without foreign aid, than that of grandeur; of which a great critic reckons it a necessary character, that it pleases still more

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the oftener it is examined \*. Yet every one must be sensible, how much more intense it is rendered by novelty; for the sublimest objects often strike us very weakly, or scarce at all, when, by long custom, they have become familiar. The sublimity of the heavens could not fail to enrapture one unaccustomed to the glorious spectacle. Though the sentiment of sublimity fills, and almost exceeds the capacity of the mind, we can yet receive along with it other pleasureable feelings, which will increase it by their conjunction. The most elevating objects in nature may be rendered more delightful by their beauty and utility. The most extensive power may be rendered more sublime, by its being exercised in such a manner as to produce moral approbation. Virgil gives a sublime idea of the Romans, when he represents them as destined for empire universal, as prescribing laws at pleasure, and forcing into subjection the most haughty opposers. But he artfully renders it more sublime, by insinuating, that they exercised their power in clemency

\* "Οταν δέ οὐπ' ἀιδήρος ἐμφρονος καὶ ἴμπειρου λόγων πολλάκις ἄκεμμισθε τι, πρὸς μεγαλοφροσύνην τὴν ψυχὴν μὴ συνδιατιθῆ, μηδὲ ἰγκαταλείπῃ, τῇ διαισθίᾳ πλεῖστον τὴν λεγομένου τὸ ἀπαθεωρέματος, πίπη δ', αὐτὸν συνιχίς ἵπισκοπῆς, εἰς ἀπαύξησιν ὅπκις ἔτι ἀληθής ἥψος εἴη. ΛΟΓΤ. περὶ ὕψ. τμη. ζ'.

clemency to willing subjects \*. This procures our moral approbation, and augments the sentiment of grandeur which it accompanies. In architecture, the separate pleasures arising from the beauty, proportion, fitness, and ornaments of the parts, heighten the sublime. In painting, the sublime is generally attended by the graceful.

POETRY is a complication of beauties, reflecting by their union additional lustre on one another. The sublime, the new, the elegant, the natural, the virtuous, are often blended in the imitation ; brightened by the power of fiction, and the richest variety of imagery ; and rendered more delightful by the harmony of numbers. When poetry is set to well-adapted music, both gain *new* power by their alliance. The music, by exciting the requisite affections, puts the mind in a disposition to conceive ideas suited to them, with peculiar facility, vivacity, and pleasure. These ideas the poet raises : and they, in their turn, enliven the affections, and preserve them from languishing or expiring, by rendering their objects more determinate. But in order to  
experience

\* Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento.  
Hæ tibi erunt artes ; pacisque imponere morem,  
*Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.*

experience this compound pleasure, both a musical ear and a poetic taste are requisite: the want of either extinguishes one part of the delight, and very much diminishes the other.

THE degree of force with which objects strike us, depends much on the *prevailing* disposition of the mind. Things often affect us deeply, when we are in an humour suited to them, though at another time they would make small impression. The smallest injury may produce fury in a person naturally passionate, or by accident chagrined. When the temper of the mind is such as gives it an habitual turn to one kind of sentiments and affections, it enters into them, whenever they occur, with extraordinary spirit. As they fall in with its predominant bent, no force is required to adapt it to the perception of them; it spontaneously, and even eagerly embraces them, as perfectly conformable to its frame.

Now, as all the objects of the same internal sense, however various, have their common qualities; so all these senses are analogous in their principles and feeling. The same turn of mind is on this account congruous to them all. The prevalence and exercise of any one of them disposes and attunes the mind to all

all the rest. And this previous disposition to them bestows strength and vigour on all their exertions. In fact, the kindred powers of taste are seldom disunited. Where all of them have considerable vigour, one may be, in comparison with the rest, predominant, either by the natural construction of the mind, or by peculiar culture: but where one of them is remarkably dull, or altogether wanting, the others scarce ever appear in full perfection.

THE union of these powers has a further influence in forming taste, as that union opens a new field, in which taste may exercise itself, and in which many flowers may be gathered for adorning the native beauty of its objects. As the fine arts are truly sisters, derived from the same common parent *nature*, they bear to one another, and to their original various similitudes, relations, and analogies \*. One who possesses all the internal senses vigorous, and has employed them all about their various objects, is able to trace out these. They have charmed every genuine critic; and every reader of taste is delighted with the metaphors and

\* *Est etiam illa Platonis vera—vox, Omnem doctrinam harum ingenuarum et humanarum artium, uno quodam societatis vinculo contineri. ----- Mirus quidam omnium quasi consensus doctrinarum, concentusque reperitur. Cic. de Orat. l. 3.*

and comparisons which are founded on the perception of them. In observing them we find a noble and exquisite entertainment. They continually occur to an extensive taste; and, mingling with the more immediate and confined gratification of each power of imagination, increase its delightfulness. As one *science*, by supplying illustrations, makes another better *understood*; so one *art*, by throwing lustre on another, makes it more exquisitely *relished*. This enlargement of taste places one, as it were, upon an eminence; and not only enables him to take in a wider prospect, but also improves all the parts of it, by comparing or contrasting them.

IN all these ways our interior senses, merely by their union, tend to form and perfect taste.

WE may here take occasion to mention a principle, distinct from all the internal senses, from which taste will, in many instances, receive assistance. It is such a *sensibility of heart*, as fits a man for being easily moved, and for readily catching, as by infection, any passion that a work is fitted to excite. The souls of men are far from being alike susceptible of impressions of this kind. A hard-hearted man can be a spectator of very great distress, without

without feeling any emotion: A man of a cruel temper has a malignant joy in producing misery. On the other hand, many are composed of so delicate materials, that the smallest uneasiness of their fellow-creatures excites their pity. A similar variety may be observed, in respect of the other passions. Persons of the former cast will be little affected by the most moving tragedy; those of the latter turn will be interested by a very indifferent one. A performance which can infuse the keenest passions into the breast of an Italian, will affect a Frenchman very little, and leave an Englishman perfectly unconcerned. We are apt to be astonished, when we read of the prodigious force with which eloquence wrought upon the delicate spirits of the Athenians; and feel so little of any thing analogous to it, that nothing but the most unexceptionable evidence could make it credible. This diversity in the formation of the heart will produce a considerable diversity, in the sentiments which men receive from works of taste, and in the judgment which they form concerning them.

A **VERY** great part of the merit of most works of genius arises from their fitness to agitate the heart with a variety of passions. In the most excellent music, the agreeableness of the melody, and the richness of the harmony,

mony, are only subservient to the expression. It is so much the business of painting and poetry to affect us, by infusing suitable passions, that a very ingenious critic\* has mistaken it for the *only* business of these arts. Some kinds of poetry are addressed principally to the powers of imagination, and attain their ultimate end, by exhibiting pictures of such objects as gratify our internal senses. Such particularly is descriptive poetry. But even this kind will soon grow languid and unentertaining, if it does not support itself, by introducing subjects of an affecting nature. In dramatic poetry, and in eloquence, the ultimate end is to affect : whatever only pleases the internal senses is subordinate to this end, and becomes faulty, if it be not conducive to it.

SINCE, therefore, the pathetic is a quality of so great moment in works of taste, a man who is destitute of sensibility of heart must be a very imperfect judge of them. He is a stranger to those feelings which are of greatest importance to direct his judgment. If a person possessed all the internal senses in perfection, without delicacy of passion, he could estimate the principal works of genius, only

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\* The Abbé du Bos. See *Reflex. Critiq. sur. la poësie & sur la peinture, passim.*

by their inferior qualities. In a tragedy, he might perceive whether descriptions of natural objects are beautiful or sublime, whether the characters are natural and well supported, whether the sentiments are just and noble : he might examine, with coldness and indifference, the beauties and the faults of the composition: but whether it has accomplished its main end, whether the fable is fit to produce pity and terror in the spectators, he must be totally at a loss to determine. In a word, he can have no relish for any thing that is addressed to the *heart*.

DELICACY of passion must be united with vigorous internal senses, in order to give taste its just extent. Where this union takes place, works of genius produce their full effect; and inspire a complicated pleasure. A man receives adequate perceptions of all their qualities, and by this means has it in his power to allow each its proper weight in determining his judgment concerning the merit of the whole. Delicacy of passion may interest a person so much, that he cannot for some time examine a performance with critical exactness; but it gives him exquisite delight in the mean time, and enables him to pass a just sentence at last.

S E C T.

## S E C T. II.

*Of the influence of Judgment upon Taste.*

THE completest union of the internal *senses*, is not of itself sufficient to form good taste, even though they be attended with the greatest delicacy of passion. They must be aided with *judgment*, the faculty which distinguishes things different, separates truth from falsehood, and compares together objects and their qualities. Judgment must indeed accompany even their most *imperfect* exertions. They do not operate, till certain qualities in objects have been perceived, discriminated from others similar, compared, and compounded. In all this, judgment is employed : it bears a part in the discernment and production of every form that strikes them. But in assisting their *perfect* energies, it has a still more extensive influence. Good sense is an indispensable ingredient in true taste, which always implies a quick and accurate perception of things as they really are.

THAT judgment may completely exhibit to the internal senses, the beauties and excellencies of *nature*, it measures the amplitude of things, determines their proportions, and traces out their wise construction and beneficial

ficial tendency. It uses all the methods which art and science indicate, for discovering those qualities that lie too deep spontaneously to strike the eye. It investigates the laws and causes of the works of *nature*: it compares and contrasts them with the more imperfect works of *art*; and thus supplies materials from which fancy may produce ideas, and form combinations, that will strongly affect the mental taste.

JUDGMENT finds out the general characters of *each art*, and, by comparing them, draws conclusions concerning the relations which subsist between *different arts*. Till it has discovered these, none of them can acquire that additional power of pleasing which is imparted to them by their mutual connexion.

IN every art, a just performance consists of various parts, combined into one system, and subservient to one design. But, without the exercise of judgment, we cannot know whether the design is skilfully prosecuted, whether the means are well adjusted to the end, whether every member which is introduced, has a tendency to promote it.

IN *music*, the *ear* immediately perceives the pleasure resulting from each principle: but *judgment*, assuming the perceptions of that organ,

gan, compares them, and by comparison determines their respective merit and due proportion. It enables the ear, from the discovery of the general relations, to distinguish with precision between invention and extravagance, to discern the suitableness or unsuitableness of the parts, and their fitness or unfitness to sustain the main subject.

IN *painting*, judgment discovers the meaning of the piece ; not only remotely, as it is the instrument of that previous knowledge which is necessary for understanding it ; but also more immediately, as, from the structure and relation of the parts, it infers the general design, and explains their subserviency to the main end of the whole. It compares the imitation with its exemplar, and sees its likeness. It is judgment, working on our experience, that puts it in our power to know, whether the painter has fixed upon the attitudes and airs in nature appropriated to the passions, characters, and actions which he would represent ; and, when these attitudes are various, whether he has chosen those which most perfectly correspond with the unity and propriety of his design. Painting being circumscribed to an instant of time, judgment alone can perceive, whether that instant is properly selected, whether the artist has pitched on that moment which

which comprehends the circumstances most essential to the grand event, and best allows, without a deviation from simplicity, the indication of the other requisite circumstances. It estimates the due proportion of all the figures, in dignity, elegance, and lustre, and their due subordination to the principal. In fine, it is necessarily employed in that exhibition of the object to the senses which must be previous to their perception of it.

IN order to approve or condemn in *poetry* or *eloquence*, we must take into view at once, and compare, so many particulars, that none can hesitate to acknowledge the absolute necessity of a sound and vigorous judgment. We must determine, whether the fable or design is well imagined in congruity to the species of the poem or discourse; whether all the incidents, or arguments are natural members of it; which of them promotes its force or beauty, or which, by its want of connexion, obstructs the end, or debilitates its genuine effect; what degree of relation is sufficient to introduce episodes, illustrations, or digressions, so that they may appear, not excrescences and deformities, but suitable decorations. It is *sense* which is pleased or displeased when these things are determined: but *judgment* alone can determine them, and present to sense the object

object of its perception. By an accurate scrutiny of the various relations of the parts, judgment fixes that situation in which they will appear with greatest advantage, and most promote that regular organization on which both the elegance and vigour of the whole depends. It compares characters with nature ; and pronounces them either real or monstrous. It compares them with other characters ; and finds them good or bad in the kind, properly or improperly marked. It compares them with themselves ; and discovers whether they are consistent or inconsistent, well or ill supported ; whether their peculiar decorum is preserved or violated. Truth and justness is the foundation of every beauty in sentiment ; it imparts to it that solidity, without which it may dazzle a vulgar eye, but can never please one who looks beyond the first appearance : and to ascertain truth, to unmask falsehood, however artfully disguised, is the peculiar prerogative of judgment. The finest sentiments, if applied to subjects unsuitable, may not only lose their beauty, but even throw deformity upon the whole : and judgment alone perceives the fitness or unfitness of their application. This faculty arrogates also to itself, in some degree, the cognisance of style and language ; and, by bringing it to the test of custom, discovers its propriety, purity, and elegance.

gance. Judgment, not satisfied with examining the separate parts, combines them, and the feelings which they produce, in order to estimate the merit of the whole. It settles the relative value of different poems and discourses, of the same or various kinds, by a studious and severe comparison of the dignity of their ends, the difficulty of attaining them, the moment of their effects, the suitableness and ingenuity of the means employed.

THUS in all the operations of taste, judgment is employed ; not only in presenting the subjects on which the senses exercise themselves ; but also in comparing and weighing the perceptions and decrees of the senses themselves, and thence passing ultimate sentence upon the whole.

BUT though the reflex senses and judgment must be united, yet, in a consistence with true taste, they may be united in very different proportions. In some, the acuteness of the *senses* ; in others, the accuracy of the *judgment*, is the predominant quality. Both will determine justly : but they are guided by different lights ; the former, by the perception of sense ; the latter, by the conviction of the understanding. One *feels* what pleases or displeases ; the other *knows* what ought to gratify or disgust. Sense  
has

has a kind of instinctive infallibility, by means of which, when it is vigorous, it can preserve from error, though judgment should not be perfect. Judgment, by contemplating the qualities that affect taste, by surveying its sentiments in their causes, often makes amends for dulness of imagination. Where *that* prevails, one's chief entertainment from works of genius lies in what he feels: where *this* is predominant, one enjoys principally the intellectual pleasure which results from discovering the causes of his feelings. This diversity in the form and constitution of taste is very observable in two of the greatest critics of antiquity. Longinus is justly characterised

*An ardent judge, who, zealous in his truth,  
With warmth gives sentence.—*

In him the internal senses were exquisitely delicate; but his judgment, though good, was not in proportion. On this account he delivers just sentiments with rapture and enthusiasm, and, by a kind of contagion, infuses them into his readers, without always explaining to them the reason of their being so affected. Aristotle, on the contrary, appears to examine his subject, perfectly cool and unaffected; he discovers no warmth of imagination, no such admiration or ecstasy, as can, without reflection, transport his readers into his opinion.

nion. He derives his decisions, not from the liveliness of feeling, but from the depth of penetration; and seldom pronounces them, without convincing us that they are just. Some degree of the same diversity may be remarked in Bouhours and Bossu among the moderns.

## S E C T. III.

*Taste improveable; by what means; and in what respects.*

BOTH reflex sense, and judgment, its associate, are originally implanted in very different degrees in different men. In some they are so *weak* and languid, that, in many instances, they scarce at all show themselves, and are incapable of a very high degree of improvement by any education, care, or exercise. In others they are naturally *vigorous*, so that they spontaneously exert themselves on most occasions, determine with considerable accuracy, and perceive with wonderful acuteness. In the *former* the seeds of taste must, without the greatest culture, lie for ever latent and inactive: and to the *latter*, culture is far from being unnecessary; by means of it,

it, the principles of taste may be improved very much beyond their original perfection \*.

WE are scarce possessed of any faculty of mind or body that is not improveable. Even our *external senses* may be rendered more acute than they were at first. Persons accustomed to observe distant objects can descry them more readily than others. Touch often becomes much more exquisite in those whose employment leads them to examine the polish of bodies, than it is in those who have no occasion for such examination. Use very much improves our quickness in distinguishing different flavours, and their compositions. But the *internal senses* may receive vastly greater alterations. The former are *ultimate principles* in human nature; and like the elemental parts, or the fundamental laws of the material world, are in a great measure exempted from our power: the latter are *derived* and *compounded* faculties, liable to alteration from every change in that series, or combination of causes, by which they are produced. The former

\* Il est certain que la nature ne fait pas toute seule un bel esprit. La plus heureuse naissance a besoin d'une bonne education, et de cet usage du monde, qui rafine l'intelligence, et qui subtilise le bon sens. 4. *Entret. d'Ariste et d'Eugene.*

This remark is as applicable to taste as to any other ingredient in the idea expressed by the term *bel esprit*.

former are more directly subservient to our preservation than our pleasure ; and therefore, like the vital motions, are almost entirely subjected to the wiser government of the Author of our natures : the latter, though highly conducive to our well-being and entertainment, are not necessary to our being ; and may, for this reason, without great hazard, be in a considerable degree intrusted to our own care, and made dependent for their perfection on the consequences of our own endeavours to regulate and improve them.

TASTE very early begins to show itself ; but it is at first *rude*, inaccurate and confined. It is *gradually* formed, and by slow steps advances towards *excellence*. Every exertion of it, if properly applied, wears off some defect, corrects some inaccuracy, strengthens some of its principles, or gives it a relish for some new object. Like all our other powers, it is subject to the law of *habit*, which is the grand, indeed the only *immediate* means of improvement of every kind, extending its power to all our faculties, both of action and of perception. Every expedient for cultivating either, is but a particular species of use and exercise, which derives its efficacy solely from the force of custom. To the forming of taste, peculiar means are in their nature suited. The same qualities

qualities of the mind which, by their operation, produce the reflex senses, will, by co-operating with habit, improve and exalt them. Whatever therefore usually excites these qualities and draws them out into act, must be a mean of cultivating taste. It grows by such congruous exercise, and always holds proportion to the natural vigour of its principles, the propriety and efficacy of the culture bestowed upon it, and the skill and diligence with which it is applied.

'Tis easy to trace the progress of taste in ourselves or others. Children discover the rudiments of it. They are passionately fond of every novelty ; pleased with order and regularity in such simple instances as they can comprehend ; delighted with a glow of colours ; admirers of every form which they think august : they perceive, often to a surprising degree, the harmony of sounds ; are charmed with an appearance of ingenuity in their diversions ; prone to imitate, and gratified by every effect of imitation which they are capable of observing : they are very quick in discerning oddity, and highly entertained with the discovery of it : and they will hardly ever fail of passing a right judgment concerning characters, when these characters are exerted in a series of actions level to their understandings.

derstandings. But a small degree of excellence satisfies them, a false semblance of it is easily imposed on them for the true; any disguise misleads them. The daubing of a sign-post, the improbable tales of nurses, the unnatural adventures of chivalry, the harsh numbers of Grubstreet rhyme, the grating notes of a strolling fidler, the coarsest buffoonery, are sufficient to delight them. In some, for want of exercise and culture, the same grossness, or contraction of taste continues always; or taste is applied in a low, perverse or whimsical manner. They may despise a relish for *childish trifles*; but themselves enter into *important subjects* with as little relish as the merest children; or are perhaps delighted with *other trifles*, a very little different or superior in kind. Of dress or equipage, of the beauties of a tulip, of a shell, or a butterfly, they are accurate judges and high admirers: but the sublimity of nature, the ingenuity of art, the grace of painting, the charms of genuine poetry, the simplicity of pastoral, the boldness of the ode, the affecting incidents of tragedy, the just representation of comedy; these are subjects of which they understand nothing, of which they can form no judgment. Many who pretend to judge, having pursued a wrong track of study, or fixed an erroneous standard of merit, betray an uninformed, fantastical,

tastical, or perverted relish. It is only in the few who improve the rudiments of taste which *nature* has implanted, by *culture* well chosen, and judiciously applied, that taste at length appears in elegant form, and just proportions.

THUS taste, like every other human excellence, is of a progressive nature; raising by various stages, from its seeds and elements to maturity; but, like delicate plants, liable to be checked in its growth and killed, or else to become crooked and distorted, by negligence, or improper management\*. *Goodness* of taste lies in its maturity and perfection. It consists in certain *excellences* of our original powers of judgment and imagination combined. These may be reduced to four; *sensibility*, *refinement*, *correctness*, and the *proportion* or *comparative adjustment* of its *separate principles*. All these must be in some considerable degree *united*, in order to form *true taste*. The person in whom they meet, acquires authority

\* Le sentiment dont je parle est dans tous les hommes, mais comme ils n'ont pas tous les oreilles et les yeux également bons, de même ils n'ont pas tous le sentiment également parfait. Les uns l'ont meilleurs que les autres, ou bien parce que leurs organes sont naturellement mieux composés, ou bien parce qu'ils l'ont perfectionné par l'usage fréquent qu'ils en ont fait, et par l'expérience. *Reflex. Crit. sur la poësie et sur la peinture, part 2. § 23.*

thority and influence, and forms just decisions; which may be rejected by the caprice of *some*, but are sure to gain *general* acknowledgment. This excellence of taste supposes, not only *culture*, but *culture judiciously applied*. Want of taste unavoidably springs from *negligence*; false taste, from *injudicious cultivation*.

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## S E C T. IV.

*Of Sensibility of Taste.*

**I**N order to form a fine taste, the mental powers which compose it, must possess *exquisite sensibility* and delicacy; must be

— *Feelingly alive*  
*To each fine impulse.* —

THERE is naturally a vast difference among mankind, in the acuteness of all their perceptive powers. They are in some, of so *tender* and delicate a structure, that they are *strongly affected* both with pleasure and pain. In others, their *dulness* renders both enjoyments and sufferings *languid*. This diversity is in none of our powers more conspicuous than in *taste*. In some, *taste* is so extremely *sensible*, that they cannot

cannot survey any excellence of art or nature, but with high relish and enthusiastic rapture; nor observe any deformity or blemish, without the keenest disgust. Others, devoted to the exercise of reason, the gratification of appetite, or the pursuits of gain, are perfect strangers to the satisfactions, or uneasinesses of taste; they can scarce form any idea of them. Addison mentions a celebrated mathematician, who was so perfectly incapable of any impression from the charms of poetry, that he read the *Aeneid*, with no other satisfaction than what he derived from a comparison of it with a map of the travels of *Aeneas*.

SENSIBILITY very much depends on the *original* construction of the mind; it being, less than any other of the qualities of good taste, *improveable* by use. The effect of *habit* on our *perceptions* is the very reverse of that which it produces on our *active powers*. It *strengthens* the latter, but gradually *diminishes* the vivacity of the former. Custom wears off the difficulty of conception, which renders new objects peculiarly agreeable or disagreeable. They come by repetition to enter the mind with so great facility, that they give no exercise to its faculties; and, by consequence, convey much less intense delight or uneasiness than at first. Hence it would seem to follow,

N

that

that the more we are conversant with objects of taste, the less forcible our sentiments should be. And indeed the most *unexperienced* feel the most *turbulent* and *violent* pleasure or pain. Use renders both more *reserved* and moderate :

*For fools admire, but men of sense approve.*

But still we find in fact, that an extensive acquaintance with the beauties of art and nature heightens our relish for them. When we are accustomed to the study, we can survey no object with indifference ; but receive higher pleasure, or more pungent disgust, than they whose taste is wholly unimproved.

THE following observations will account for this seeming paradox.

WERE the *same* object, however excellent, to be continually presented to our taste, it must soon lose its charms : first becoming indifferent, and then disgusting, by the languor which a continual identity of exercise would introduce. Hence no natural scene, no production of art or genius, can please us long, except every new survey discovers beauties unobserved before, or gives us additional assurance of its perfection. But the objects of taste are infinitely various. One who indulges it is continually changing

changing his subjects, and feeling pleasures, or pains really distinct, though in the highest degree analogous. He thus preserves a sort of *novelty*, which tends to keep up the original vivacity of his perceptions: and the continual employment of taste produces some *effects* which compensate, nay often overbalance, the gradual decay of sensibility by repetition.

IT is by enabling us to conceive objects with *facility*, that custom diminishes the strength of their impressions. But *facility*, if moderate, is a source of pleasure: it will therefore, by its *immediate* influence, for some time prevent our delight from being weakened. Custom also renders our conceptions, though less *striking*, yet more *complete* and accurate. A more perfect object is presented to the mind, than could be, previous to use: and its greater *perfection* may increase our approbation or dislike, as much as *novelty* did before. A performance often fails to please or disgust, merely because, having an inadequate idea of its parts, we do not observe the qualities from which these sentiments should result. A person unskilled in poetry and painting will survey a work with perfect indifference, because he does not really see its beauties, or its blemishes. But let these be pointed out to him by one more known in the art, immediately he begins

gins to approve, or disapprove. Custom supplies the place of an external monitor, by enabling us to take in at one view a full perception of every quality on which the excellence or faultiness depends.

IT may be observed farther, that taste, being a faculty of a derivative kind, implies in its exertion mental *actions*, which are strengthened by use and exercise. And *their* improvement tends to support the delicacy and liveliness of *its* perceptions. Custom strengthens those principles and processes of thought by which our reflex sensations are produced; and the sensations must always bear some proportion to the vigour of their causes. The mind acquires a habit of enlarging itself to receive the sentiment of sublimity, by being accustomed to expand its faculties to the dimensions of a large object: by use, it becomes skilful in compounding uniformity with variety; in measuring proportion; in tracing out design; in judging of imitation; in blending heterogeneous qualities. This expertness gives force and boldness to the sentiments produced, and heightens the attendant consciousness of our own abilities.

OBJECTS impress us more or less, according to the degree of *attention* which we bestow upon them. Custom enables us to apply

ply our minds more vigorously to objects than we could do at first. Not only is it difficult, to *form* a complete conception of new objects; but, when they excite neither surprise nor curiosity, it is sometimes even difficult to *attempt* conceiving them, and to bring ourselves steadily to contemplate them. Custom wears off this indisposition; begets an aptitude and previous bias to the emotions which beauty and deformity inspires; and thus renders us prone to their peculiar sentiments. Works of taste fall in with the predominant temper, and on that account easily engage the attention, affect us deeply, and excite the liveliest perceptions. It is remarkable too, from whatever cause it proceeds, that we set a high value on what we have been long accustomed to. A man of taste places the pleasures of imagination in a higher class than other men are apt to do; he esteems them more noble and substantial: and the opinion acquired by custom, of their value and importance, transfuses itself into each gratification.

THE sentiments of taste depend very much on *association*. So far as they proceed from this, *custom* must augment them; as custom, by adding a new principle of union, renders the connexion more intimate, and introduces the related ideas more quickly and forcibly.

Custom

Custom likewise begets new associations, and enables works of taste to suggest ideas which were not *originally* connected with them : and what a surprising intenseness the association of ideas, originally foreign, bestows on our perceptions, both pleasurable and painful, is obvious in too many instances to require being enlarged on.

By the concurrence of these causes, the sensibility of taste is even *augmented*, notwithstanding the tendency of habit to *diminish* it. Its gratification or disgust is often more exquisite, than any of the emotions which attend appetite and passion. It becomes so accute, that the *smallest* beauties and blemishes have force sufficient to affect it. But though the vivacity of its perceptions should sometimes decay by repetition ; yet custom, producing the other perfections of taste, gives a refinement, elegance, and assurance to our sentiments, which may compensate their *violence* at first. *Judgment* may approve with the greatest confidence and justice, when *fancy* is no longer enraptured and enthusiastically moved.

SENSIBILITY of taste arises chiefly from the structure of our internal senses, and is but indirectly and remotely connected with the soundness or improvement of judgment. Insensibility

sibility is *one* ingredient in many sorts of false taste; but does not alone constitute so much one species of *wrong* taste, as a total *deficiency* or great *weakness* of taste. Sensibility may sometimes becomes *excessive*; and render us extravagant both in liking and disliking, in commanding and blaming. But in truth, this extravagance proceeds much less commonly from excess of sensibility, than from a defect in the other requisites of fine taste; from an incapacity to distinguish and ascertain, with precision, different degrees of excellence, or faultiness. Instead of forming an adequate idea of the nature of the beauty or deformity, we go beyond all bounds of moderation; and when we want to express our sentiments, can do it only in general terms, tumid and exaggerated. If we are displeased, we signify it, with the inveteracy of a Dennis, in terms of general invective; and, without explaining the causes of our disapprobation, pronounce it poor, dull, wretched, execrable. If we are pleased, we cannot tell with what, how, or why; but only declare it fine, incomparable, with the unmeaning rapture of an ancient rhapsodist, who, without understanding the principles of art, or the sense of an author, like a madman, really agitated by the fury which the poets feigned, could recite or praise them

them with such vehemence, as transported himself, and astonished his auditors \*.

\* From Plato's dialogue inscribed *Io*, we learn, that there were men of this character, who travelled through Greece, and contended at the public festivals. Their chief employment was, to repeat beautiful passages from the poets, particularly Homer, with a rapturous and enthusiastic pronunciation, as if they had an exquisite and warm perception of their excellence. It is probable that they also declaimed in praise of their favourite verses: This seems to be implied in the expressions, *περὶ ποιητῶν διαλέγειν*, *περὶ Ὀμήνες λίγες καὶ ιυπόρεις*, and is insinuated by the proof which Socrates produces of their ignorance of art, from the capacity of every real artist to distinguish beauties from faults, and to point them out in the works of any performer in the kind. Socrates proves, from the concessions of his antagonist, that neither did his sentiments proceed from true taste, from a vigorous perception of the beauties he recited, nor his encomiums from judgment, from a critical skill in the principles of beauty. He therefore, in his usual strain of irony, resolves both into an unaccountable agitation of spirit, proceeding either from madness or from inspiration; and with great humour compares the several muses to as many magnets. The muse inspires the poet, without any agency or knowledge of his; he, in the same manner, conveys the inspiration to his rhapsodist; and he to his attentive hearers: just as the loadstone, by its imperceptible and unaccountable influence, attracts a ring of iron, that a second, and that a third.

## S E C T. V.

*Of Refinement of Taste.*

**R**EFINEMENT, or *elegance*, which, as well as sensibility, is included in the idea of *delicacy*, is another quality requisite for forming a perfect taste.

TASTE is so deeply rooted in human nature, that none are pleased but with some degree of *real excellence* and beauty. But a very *low* degree will *satisfy* one who is acquainted with nothing higher. As we can form no simple *idea*, till its correspondent *sensation* has been first perceived; so, with respect to many of our ideas, we are confined to that precise *degree* of which we have had experience, and cannot by any means enlarge them. Our thoughts can scarce be raised to a distinct conception of higher pleasure or pain, than we have actually felt. On this account *real excellence*, however *low*, will not only *gratify*, but *fill* the unimproved sense \*. But know-

O knowledge

\* Je ne comprends pas le bas peuple dans le public capable de prononcer sur les poëmes ou sur les tableaux, comme de décider à quel degré ils sont excellents. Le mot de public ne renferme ici que les personnes qui ont acquis des lumières, soit par la lecture, soit par la commerce

ledge of greater perfection in the kind produces *nicety*; makes our pleasure, when obtained, more elegant; but renders it more difficult to be obtained. Thespis in his cart, no doubt, charmed his contemporaries, though his rude and imperfect representations would have afforded little entertainment to their politer successors, accustomed to the completer drama of Sophocles and Euripides. The coarse jests of Plautus, not only pleased the general taste, but gained the approbation of Cicero; and never lost their credit, till the politeness of a court produced a refinement in wit and humour\*. A very sorry ballad, or the wildest flights of ungoverned fancy, are admired by the vulgar: but nothing inferior to the regular invention and masterly execution of Homer can

merce du monde. Elles sont les seules qui puissent marquer le rang des poëmes et des tableaux, quoiqu'il se rencontre dans les ouvrages excellents des beautés capable de se faire sentir au peuple du plus bas étage et de l'obliger à se récrier. Mais comme il est sans connoissance des autres ouvrages, il n'est pas en état de discerner à quel point le poëme qui le fait pleurer, est excellent, ni quel rang il doit tenir parmi les autres poëmes. *Reflex. Crit. sur la poësie et sur la peinture, part 2. § 22.*

\* At vestri proavi Plautinos et numeros et  
Laudavere sales; nimium patienter utrumque  
(Ne dicam stulte) mirati: si modo ego et vos  
Scimus inurbanum lepido seponere dictum.

*Hor. Ars Poet. ver. 270.*

can fully satisfy a perfect taste. An indifferent tune on a bad instrument contents the many: but the imperfection, or grossness of its harmony is intolerable to a fine ear.

HABIT, as was observed, tends to diminish the sensibility of taste. From this diminution, refinement in some degree proceeds. In proportion as our gratifications lose their intense-ness by repetition, we become indifferent to the *imperfect* degrees of beauty which fully satisfied us before. We are no longer touched with ordinary charms; but acquire a kind of avidity, which demands the utmost beauty and perfection. Where-ever this is wanting, we feel a deficiency, we are unsatisfied and disappointed.

BUT refinement and elegance of taste is chiefly owing to the acquisition of *knowledge*, and the *improvement* of judgment.

USE must greatly promote it, though, without any cultivation of our faculties, it should only store our memory with ideas of a variety of productions. For we should thus be able to *compare* our present object with others of the kind. And though men are well enough satisfied with *indifferent* performances in every art, while they are ignorant of *better*; yet no sooner

sooner do they become acquainted with what has superior merit, than they readily, of their own accord, give it the preference. And, as comparison has a great influence on the mind, many things which might be tolerable, if viewed by themselves, will disgust, when set in competition with others. To one who has been little conversant in works of art or genius, that may wear the charm of novelty, and appear to have the merit of invention, which another discerns to be trite and common, or a mere servile copy. What has in itself some degree of sublimity or beauty, often appears mean or deformed by comparison with forms more august or graceful. The unexperienced will admire, as the effect of prodigious skill, what one who is acquainted with more artful contrivance, or more ingenious imitation, censures as arrant bungling. To a taste refined, and by practice qualified for making comparisons, an *inferior* sort or degree of beauty appears a real and positive *blemish* \*.

## HABITUAL

\* An ingenious French critic well remarks the importance of being enabled to form comparisons, by having had opportunity of studying many excellent performances. “ On ne parle pas de l’expression aussi bien qui Pline et les autres écrivains de l’antiquité en ont parlé, quand on ne s’y connaît pas. D’ailleurs il falloit que des statues, où il se trouve une expression aussi

HABITUAL acquaintance with the objects of taste, not only thus supplies a stock of knowledge, but also wonderfully *improves* the judgment. There is none of our faculties on which custom has a greater influence. Though at first it could only discover and distinguish the most *obvious* qualitics of things, it may, by exercise, acquire acuteness sufficient to penetrate into such as are most *latent*, and to perceive such as are most *delicate*. At first it can take in only the simplest combinations of qualities or short trains of ideas ; but, by being often employed, it acquires enlargement ; and is enabled to comprehend, to retain distinctly, and to compare with ease, the most complicated habitudes, and the largest and most intricate compositions of ideas. In consequence of culture, it discovers, in objects, qualities fit to operate on taste, which lie too deep for the observation of a novice ; it can investigate the  
nicest

“ aussi savante et aussi corrécle que celle du Laocoon,  
“ du Rotateur, de la Paix des Grecs, rendissent les an-  
“ ciens connoisseurs et même difficiles sur l'expression.  
“ Les anciens qui, outre les statues que j'ai citées, a-  
“ voient encore une infinité d'autres pieces de compa-  
“ raison excellentes, ne pouvoient pas se tromper en ju-  
“ geant de l'expression dans les tableaux, ni prendre le  
“ mediocre en ce genre pour l'exquis.” *Reflex. Crit.*  
*sur la poësie, et sur la peinture, part 1. § 38.* The same  
author repeats and illustrates this observation in many o-  
ther passages.

nicest and most complex perfections, and lay open the most trivial faults \*. Hence what was at first censured as a fault, often, on our taste becoming refined, appears to be a beauty. When reason is weak, it loses itself in a long and intricate demonstration ; it cannot retain the connexion of the whole ; it sees nothing but confusion, and obtains neither conviction nor delight. In like manner, in matters of taste, judgment, when rude and unimproved, is bewildered amidst the complexity of its object, or lost in its obscurity ; and by being baffled excites disgust. But, as soon as custom has enabled it to surmount this difficulty, and enlarge its views, it excites high approbation of those beauties which were formerly disrelished. As the most complicated reasonings become most entertaining, the most *subtile* excellencies produce the most refined approbation. Being remote, and veiled, as it were, they give exercise to our faculties ; and, by drawing out the vigour of the mind, *continue* to please, when the *grosser* and more palpable qualities have entirely palled upon the sense. They are like those delicate flavours, which, though not so agreeable at first, please much

\* *Quam multa vident pictores in umbris et in eminentia, quæ nos non videmus ? quam multa, que nos fugiunt in cantu, exaudiunt in eo genere exercitati ? Cic. Acad. Quest. lib. 2.*

much longer than such as are too luscious, or too much stimulate the organ \*. The profusion of ornament bestowed on the *parts*, in Gothic structures, may please one who has not acquired enlargement of mind sufficient for conceiving at one view their relation to the *whole*; but no sooner is this acquired, than he perceives

\* The truth of this observation Cicero, without assigning the cause, illustrates, in a variety of instances, with regard both to taste and the external senses : “ Difficile enim dictu est, quænam causa sit, cur ea, quæ maxime sensus nostros impellunt voluptate, et specie prima a cerrime commovent, ab iis celerrime fastidio quodam, et satietate abalienemur. Quanto colorum pulchritudine et varietate floridiora sunt in picturis novis pleraque, quam in veteribus ? quæ tamen etiam, si primo asperco nos ceperunt, diutius non delestant : cum iidem nos in antiquis tabulis illo ipso horrido obsoletoque teneamur. Quanto moliores sunt, et delicatores in cantu flexiones, et falsæ voculæ, quam certæ et severæ ? quibus tamen non modo austeri, sed si, sæpius fiunt, multitudo ipsa reclamat. Licit hoc videre in reliquis sensibus, unguentis minus diu nos delectari, summa et a cerrima suavitate conditis, quam his moderatis : et magis laudari quod terram, quam quod crocum olere videatur. In ipso tactu esse modum et mollitudinis et levitatis. Quinetiam gustatus, qui e& sensus ex omnibus maxime voluptarius, quippe dulcitudine præter cæteros sensus commovetur, quam cito id, quod valde dulce est, aspernatur ac respuit ? quis potione uti, aut cibo dulci diutius potest ? cum utroque in genere ea, quæ leviter sensum voluptate moveant, facilissime fiant satietatem. Sic omnibus in rebus, voluptatibus maximis fastidium finitimum est.” *Cic. de Orat. lib. 3.*

perceives superior elegance in the more *simple* symmetry and proportion of Grecian architecture. Italian music gives small delight at first ; but when once the ear is opened to take in the complexity of its harmony, and the delicate relations of discords, introduced with skilful preparations and resolutions, it then gives exquisite delight. The same may be observed of the refinements of poetry and eloquence, of wit and humour. The copious and varied declamation of Cicero will make a quicker impression than the simple nervous eloquence of Demosthenes ; but this gives the highest and most durable satisfaction to a fine taste. The polite and knowing are chiefly touched with those delicacies which would escape the notice of a vulgar eye.

IT is possible to acquire so great refinement, especially when taste is accompanied with genius, that we conceive in *idea* a standard of higher excellence than was ever in *fact* produced ; and, measuring the effects of art by this absolute and exalted form, we always miss some part of that immensity which we have figured out to ourselves \*. Leonardo da Vinci is said

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M. Antonius—disertos ait se vidisse multos, eloquentem omnino neminem. Insidebat videlicet in ejus mente species eloquentiae, quam cernebat animo, re ipsa non videbat.—Multa et in se, et in aliis desiderans, neminem plane

to have conceived so high a standard of perfection, that, from despair of reaching it in the execution, he left many of his pictures unfinished. When imagination is inflamed and elevated by the perfection exhibited to it, it goes on of its own accord to fancy completer effects than artists have found means actually to produce: by reason of some unliableness in the materials employed, the *execution* seems always to fall short of our *conception*. No performer can excel in every thing: each is characterised by some predominant talent. The particular excellence of one enables us to discern the faultiness of another. And by combining the virtues that are dispersed among the different masters, into one image; as Zeuxis produced an Helen, by selecting, from many beautiful virgins, the parts that were in each most beautiful \*; we form in our minds a model of perfection, the parts of which, though taken from different originals, are rendered consistent, by the skill with which they are articulated. A man of

P genius,

plane qui recte appellari eloquens posset videbat.—Habuit profecto comprehensam animo quandam formam eloquentis, cui quoniam nihil deerat, eos, quibus aliquid, aut plura deerant, in eam formam non poterat includere.

— Ipse Demosthenes, quamquam unus eminent inter omnes in omni genere dicendi, tamen non semper implet aures meas: ita sunt avidæ et capaces: et semper aliquid immensum, infinitumque desiderant. Cic. Orat.

\* Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. 35. cap. 9.

genius, possessed of so sublime a standard, endued with such exquisite refinement of taste, in whatever art he practises, will represent his objects, not merely as they are, but, like Sophocles, as they ought to be \*. A taste thus refined will not capriciously *reject* whatever it perceives to be deficient :

*Nani neque chorda sonum reddit, quem volt manus et mens ;*

*Nec semper feriet, quodcunque minabitur arcus.*

But it can be *satisfied* and *filled*, only with the highest perfection that is practicable.

REFINEMENT of taste exists only where to an original delicacy of imagination, and natural acuteness of judgment, is superadded a long and intimate acquaintance with the best performances of every kind. None should be studied but such as have real excellence ; and those are chiefly to be dwelt upon which display new beauties on every review. The most conspicuous virtues will be at first perceived. Farther application will discover such as lie too deep

\* Indeed the great masters in every art imitate, not so much individual nature, as a sublimer standard which exists only in their own conceptions. This Aristotle observes in poetry, *τιμὴ πονητ. εὐφ. Σ'.* The same is true of painting. See above, part I. sect. 4. This subject is explained with equal solidity and elegance, by the author of *A Commentary and Notes on Horace's Epistles to the Pisoæ*, note on ver. 317.

deep to strike a superficial eye ; especially if we aid our own acuteness by the observations of those whose superior penetration, or more accurate study, has produced a genuine subtilty of taste. An able master, or an ingenious critic, will point out to a novice, many qualities in the compositions of genius, or the productions of art, which, without such assistance, would have long, perhaps always, remained undiscovered by him. And repeated discoveries of this kind, either made by one's own sagacity, or indicated by others, beget in time an habitual refinement, a capacity of making similar ones with facility and quickness.

WHERE refinement is wanting, taste must be coarse and vulgar. It can take notice only of the grosser beauties, and is disgusted only with the most shocking faults. The thinnest disguise, the least depth is sufficient to elude its scrutiny. It is insensible to the delicacies of art and nature : they are too fine, and make too slight an impression to be observed. As savages can be touched with nothing but what excites the utmost extravagance of passion, so a gross and barbarous taste can relish nothing that is not either palpable or overdone. Chaste beauties it has not acuteness to perceive ; complex ones it has not force enough to comprehend. Looking only to the surface, it often approves

approves what is really faulty or defective, and is indifferent to what possesses the utmost elegance. Its decisions are, by consequence, disproportioned to the real merit of the objects : the most glaring, the least artificial performances are sure to gain the preference. It has been often remarked, that a certain grossness, and want of refinement in the English taste, allows and even demands a boldness, a grossness, and indelicacy, in their theatrical entertainments, which would be intolerable to the elegant taste of a French audience.

BUT an excessive or false refinement is equally to be avoided \*. It is like a weakly constitution, which is disordered by the minutest accident, or like a distempered stomach which nauseates every thing. It is a capriciousness of mind, which begets an habit of constantly prying into qualities that are remote, of discovering imaginary delicacies, or faults which none else can perceive ; while one is blind to what lies perfectly open to his view ; like the old philosopher who was so intent on the contemplation

\* True taste is a proper medium betwixt these extremes. “ Ce discernement fait connoître les choses “ telles qu’elles sont en elles-mêmes, sans qu’on demeure “ court, comme le peuple, qui s’arrête à la superficie ; “ ni aussi sans qu’on aille trop loin, comme ces esprits “ rafinés, qui à force de subtiliser s’évaporent en des i-“ maginations vaines et chimeriques.” *Entret. 4. d’Arist.*

plation of the heavens, that he could not see the pit that had been dug directly in his way. Or it is a minuteness of taste, which leads one to seek after and approve trifling excellencies ; or to avoid and condemn inconsiderable negligencies, a scrupulous regard to which is unworthy of true genius. Or it is a fastidiousness of judgment, which will allow *no* merit to what has not the *greatest*, will bear no mediocrity or imperfection ; but with a kind of malignity, represents every blemish as inexpiable.

THIS depravity of taste has led many authors, studious of delicacy, to substitute subtilty and unnatural affectation \* in its stead. The younger Pliny says, “ The gods took Nerva from “ the earth, when he had adopted Trajan, lest “ he should do any action of an ordinary na-“ ture, after this divine and immortal deed. “ For this noble work deserved the honour of “ being the last action of his life, that, the au-“ thor of it being immediately deified, poste-“ rity might be left in doubt, whether he was  
“ not

\* Quintilian marks strongly some features of this vicious refinement, as it appeared among the orators of his time. “ Tum demum ingeniosi scilicet, si ad intelli-“ gendos nos opus sit ingenio.——Nos melius, quibus “ sordent omnia quæ natura dictavit ; qui non ornamen-“ ta querimus, sed lenocinia.” *Inst. Orat. lib. 8. proem.*

“ not really a god when he performed it \*.” This is mere subtlety, not true refinement ; for it has no solidity. Seneca, aiming constantly at elegance, corrupted the Roman eloquence, by introducing a childish prettiness, a profusion of antithesis and point †. When poetry and eloquence are brought to perfection, the next generation, desiring to excel their predecessors, and unable to reach their end by keeping in the road of truth and nature, are tempted to turn aside into unbeatened tracks of nicety and affectation. The novelty catches, and infects the general taste. By its standard the simplest and the correctest authors are canvassed, secret meanings, artful allegories, distant illusions, and the like fanciful qualities, are discovered and applauded, where they never were intended. Homer compares Menelaus, exulting at the sight of Paris, when advancing to engage him in single combat, to a hungry lion, when he seizes

\* Dii cœlo vindicaverunt, ne quid post illud divinum, et immortale factum, mortale faceret. Deberi quippe maximo operi hanc venerationem, ut novissimum esset, auctoremque ejus statim consecrandum, ut quandoque inter posteros quereretur, an illud jam Deus fecisset.  
*Plin. Paneg. Trag.*

† This censure is passed on him by an unquestionable judge. “ In eloquendo corrupta pleraque, atque eo per-“ niciosissima, quod abundant dulcibus vitiis.” *Quint. Infl. Orat. lib. 10. cap. 1.*

seizes a deer or a wild goat \*. This similitude strongly and beautifully expresses the courage and alacrity with which he met his rival. But this does not satisfy some of his scholiasts. They will have Paris compared to a goat for his incontinence, and to a deer for his cowardice, and his love of music. In Jupiter's golden chain †, some have discovered an emblem of the excellence of absolute monarchy ; and in Agamemnon's cutting off the head and hands of Antimachus's son ‡, have imagined an allusion to the crime of the father, who had proposed to lay *hands* on the ambassadors that demanded the return of Helen, and from whose *head* the advice to detain her had proceeded. False refinement dislikes on grounds equally chimerical and inadequate as those which procure its approbation. The delicacy of Aristarchus was so much shocked with Phœnix's horrible intention of murdering his father in the extravagance of his rage, that he cancelled the lines in which it is, with great propriety, related, on purpose to represent to Achilles the fatal mischiefs that spring from ungoverned fury and resentment ||. The nicety of Rymer is disgusted

\* Iliad. γ'. ver. 21.

† Ila. 9'.

‡ Ila. λ'.

|| Ila. 1. ver. 460. Τὸς μὲν ἴγω βέλευσα, κ. τ. λ. This nicety Plutarch justly censures as capricious and ill applied:

ed with the cunning and villany of Iago, as unnatural and absurd, soldiers being commonly described with openness and honesty of character \*. To critics of this class, Homer's low similitudes, and simple manners, or Shakespear's irregularities and unharmonious numbers are intolerable faults.

FALSE delicacy in critics may in some measure proceed from an excessive sensibility of taste, or subtlety of judgment indulged without distinction or reserve. But most commonly it is the offspring of vanity and ignorance. Pride leads us to affect a refinement which we have not ; we know not in what real excellence consists ; we therefore fix some partial or whimsical standard, and, judging by it, run into false elegance and capricious nicety. True taste penetrates into all the qualities of its objects, and is warmly affected with whatever it perceives. Its mimic, false refinement, fearful lest any thing should escape its notice, imagines qualities which have no existence, and is extravagantly touched with the chimeras of its own creation.

### S E C T.

plied : 'Ο μὲν οὐ, Ἀρίσταρχος ἴξεῖται ταῦτα τὰ ἔπη. ἵχει δὲ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν ὄφθως, τὸ Φοίνικον; τὸν Ἀχιλλία διδάσκοντος, οὗτον ἐπειδὴν ὅργην, καὶ ὅσα διὰ Θυμὸν ἀνθρώπος τολμῶσι, μὴ χράμενος λογισμῷ μηδὲ πειθόμενος τοῖς παρηγορεῖσι. Πᾶς δὲ τὸν οὐδὲ ποιημάτια ἀκέπειν.

\* See Rymer's View of Tragedy, chap. 7.

## S E C T. VI.

*Of Correctness of Taste.*

**S**ENSIBILITY disposes us to be strongly affected with whatever beauties or faults we perceive. Refinement makes us capable of discovering both, even when they are not obvious. *Correctness* must be superadded, that we may not be imposed upon by false appearances; that we may neither approve shining faults, nor condemn modest virtues; but be able to assign to every quality its due proportion of merit or demerit.

CORRECTNESS of taste preserves us from approving or disapproving any objects but such as possess the qualities which render them really laudable or blameable; and enables us to distinguish these qualities with accuracy from others, however similar, and to see through the most artful disguise that can be thrown upon them. Though we never approve, or disapprove, when those characters, which are the natural grounds of either, are known to be wanting; yet we often embrace a cloud for Juno, we mistake the semblance for the substance, and, in *imagination*, attribute characters to objects, to which they do not *in fact*

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fact

*fact* belong. And then, though merely *fictitious*, they have as *real* an effect upon our sentiments as if they were genuine; just as the chimerical connexion between spirits and darkness, which *prejudice* has established in some, produces as great terror as if they were in *nature* constantly conjoined.

EVERY excellence is a middle between two extremes, one of which always bears some likeness to it, and is apt to be confounded with it. The right and the wrong are not separated by an uncontested boundary. Like day and night, they run insensibly into one another: and it is often hard to fix the precise point where one ends, and the other begins. In attempting it, the unskilful may readily misapply their censure or their praise. In every art sublimity is mimic'd by prodigious forms, empty swelling, and unnatural exaggeration:

*Dum vitat humum, nubes et inania captat.*

Some of Homer's images, admired by Longinus as eminently great, less judicious critics have, notwithstanding his authority, arraigned as monstrous and tumid \*. And many passages which he rejects, would have given

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\* Such as his description of Discord, already taken notice of, which is highly blamed by Scaliger. *Poet.* l. 5. c. 3.

no offence to a judge of less correctness: he condemns as extravagantly hyperbolical, the image used by an orator to express the stupidity of the Athenians, “ That they carried their brains in the soles of their feet \* ;” which yet Hermogenes, a critic of considerable accuracy, approves. The former of these critics charges Gorgias with the tumid for calling vultures “ living sepulchres † ;” and the latter thinks the author worthy of such a sepulchre, for using so unnatural a figure ‡. But Boileau is of opinion, that it would escape all censure in poetry; and Bouhours adopts his sentiments ||. Lucan’s extravagance, and Statius’s impetuosity, are often on the confines of true majesty and vehemence; and Virgil’s correctness has sometimes drawn upon him an accusation of flatness and enervation. Affected

\* This sentiment is ascribed by some to Demosthenes, by others to his colleague Hegesippus. It is blamed by Longinus, περὶ ὑψοῦ τμη. λόγ. But Hermogenes, περὶ ιδεῶν, τμ. ἀ. κιφ. σ'. admits it as a genuine beauty.

† Ταύτη καὶ τὰ τῆς Διοστίνου Γοργίου γελάτια γράφοσθος, γύπες ἵματυχοι τάφοι. ΔΟΓΓ. περὶ ὕψεων. τμη. γ'

‡ Τάφοις τε γάρ ἵματυχοις τὰς γύπας λίγεσσι, ἀπέρι εἰσι μάζα λιστα δέξιοι. ΕΡΜΟΓ. περὶ ιδεῶν. τυ. ἀ. κιφ. 6.

|| Je doute qu'elle deplût aux poëtes de notre siecle, et elle ne seroit pas en effet si condamnable dans les vers. Boileau Remarq. sur Longin.; Bouhours, *La Man. de bien pens. dial.* 3.

ted graces, undistinguished glare, and false ornaments, border upon beauty, and sometimes gain the preference. This very circumstance has procured, from a florid taste, higher approbation of the poets of modern Italy, than to those of ancient Greece and Rome. Extravagance may be mistaken for invention; servility, for what is natural. It is no easy matter, in every case, to place a just barrier betwixt poverty and simplicity; confusion and agreeable intricacy; obscurity and refinement; prolixity and copiousness; languor and softness; enervation and perspicuity: or to distinguish the formal from the solemn; the excessive from the bold and masterly; or the stiff and insipid from the correct. Protogenes is said to have rendered his pictures void of spirit, by extreme care to obtain correctness; for which he is censured by Apelles, as not knowing when to give over \*. Cicero himself records and approves many turns of wit, which, to a *modern* taste, appear low or coarse; many of the ornaments which he recommends to an orator, would pass with us for mere pun and quibble. In the extremes, affection

\* Cum Protogenis opus, immensi laboris et curæ, supra modum anxie miraretur, dixit omnia sibi cum illo paria esse, aut illi meliora: sed uno se præstare, quod manum ille de tabula nesciret tollere; memorabili præcepto, nocere sæpe nimiam diligentiam. *Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. 35. cap. 10.*

affection and frigidity are very different from wit ; distortion of thought or illiberal buffoonery, from humour ; and scurrility or invective, from genuine ridicule : but there are particular instances, concerning which very good judges may hesitate, before they can assign them to one species or the other. Beauties and blemishes often so far resemble in their general appearance, that an imperfect taste may readily confound them ; approving where it should condemn, or blaming what merits praise. It is only a well-cultivated taste, implying vigorous judgment, sharpened by exercise, that can in every case pull off the mask, and certainly distinguish them.

CUSTOM enables us to form ideas with exactness and precision. By studying works of taste, we acquire clear and distinct conceptions of those qualities which render them beautiful or deformed : we take in at one glance all the essential properties ; and thus establish in the mind a criterion, a touchstone of excellence and depravity. Judgment also becomes skilful by exercise, in determining, whether the object under consideration perfectly agrees with this mental standard. While it is unaccustomed to a subject, it may, through its own imbecility, and for want of clear ideas of the characters of the kind, mistake resemblance  
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for identity ; or at least be unable to distinguish them, without laborious application of thought, frequent trials, and great hazard of error. But when use has rendered any species of exertion familiar, it easily and infallibly discriminates, where-ever there is the minutest difference. We grow so well acquainted with every form, and have ideas so perfectly adequate, that we are secure against mistake, when sufficient attention is bestowed. The real qualities of things are presented to taste pure and unmixed, in their genuine features and proportions, and excite sentiments entirely congruous.

JUSTNESS of taste extends still farther than to the distinction of counterfeit from real. We can compare the sentiments produced, and discover readily the different classes to which they belong. We not only feel in general *that* we are pleased, but perceive in *what* particular manner ; not only discern that there is *some* merit, but also of what determinate *kind* that merit is. Though all the sensations of taste are, in the highest degree, analogous and similar ; yet each has its peculiar feeling, its specific form, by which one who has a distinct idea of it, and possesses exactness of judgment, may mark its difference from the others. It is this which bestows precision and order on our

our sentiments. Without it, they would be a mere confused chaos : we should, like persons in a mist, see something, but could not tell what we saw. Every good or bad quality, in the works of art or genius, would be a mere *je ne sais quoi*.

As a correct taste distinguishes the *kinds*, it also measures the *degrees*, of excellence and faultiness. Every one is conscious of the degree of approbation or dislike which he bestows on objects. But sometimes the ideas which we retain of these sensations are so obscure, or our comparing faculty so imperfect, that we only know in general, that one gratification is higher or more intense than another ; but cannot settle their *proportion*, nor even perceive the *excess*, except it be considerable. We are often better pleased at first with superficial glitter, or gaudy beauty, which, having no solidity, become, on examination, insipid or distasteful, than with substantial merit, which will stand the test of reiterated scrutiny.

— *quæ, si proprius sit,*  
*Te capiet magis ; —*  
*Judicis argutum quæ non formidat acumen.*

But as the perceptions of an improved taste are always adequate to the merit of the objects; so an accurate judgment is sensible, on comparison,

parison, of the least diversity in the degree of the pleasure, or pain produced. And if we have ascertained those qualities which are the causes of our sentiments, reflection on the degrees of them which things possess, will help to regulate our decision, and prevent our being imposed upon by any ambiguity in our feelings ; giving us both an exacter standard, and an additional security against judging wrong.

THE accuracy of taste may become so exquisite, that it shall not only discriminate the different kinds and degrees of gratification, but also mark the least varieties in the manner of producing it. It is this accuracy, habitually applied to works of taste, that lays a foundation for our discovering the peculiar character and manner of different masters. A capacity for this, as it implies the nicest exactness, is justly assigned as an infallible proof of real and well-improved taste.

INCORRECTNESS of taste may arise, either from the dulness of our internal *senses*, or from the debility of *judgment*. The former renders our sentiments obscure and ill-defined, and therefore difficult to be compared. The latter incapacitates us for perceiving the relations even of the clearest perceptions, or the most distinguishable qualities. In either case, the mind  
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is distracted with suspense and doubt. This is an uneasy state, from which we are desirous to extricate ourselves by any means. If we have not vigour of taste enough, to determine the merit of the object, by its intrinsic characters, we take up with any standard, however foreign or improper, that can end our wavering. Authority in all its forms usurps the place of truth and reason. The usage of an admired genius will procure approbation even to *faults*, from one whose taste is languid. He is unable readily to detect them ; and their being committed by so great a master, and intermixed with many beauties, will keep him from even suspecting that they can be wrong ; and consequently prevent his scrutiny. Like the spots of the sun, which cannot be discovered by the naked eye, the faults of an eminent genius require something more to enable us to discern them, than the elements of taste which nature bestows : till these are invigorated by culture, those will disappear in the general splendor. The *genius* of Shakespear may betray an unformed taste into an approbation of the *barbarities* which are often mingled with his beauties. The wits of King Charles's court are said to have allowed Cowley an undistinguished admiration. One may be too much pleased with Congreve's wit, to remark its incongruity to the characters to which it is ascribed.

The veneration which we have for antiquity, aided by the show of learning which acquaintance with it implies, and by the malignant joy which envy feels in depreting contemporaries, often stamps a value on its productions, disproportioned to their intrinsic merit:

— *Et nisi quæ terris semota, suisque  
Temporibus defuncta videt, fastidit et odit.*

The opinion and example of others often recommends to us what is fashionable or new, without our taking the pains to examine it. And their opinion is often, not founded on judgment, but dictated by interest, friendship, enmity, or party-spirit: “ Every period of “ time has produced bubbles of artificial fame, “ which are kept up a while by the breath of “ fashion, and then break at once and are an-“ nihilated. The learned often bewail the “ loss of ancient writers, whose characters “ have survived their works; but, perhaps, if “ we could retrieve them, we should find “ them only the Granvilles, Montagues, Step-“ neys, and Sheffields of their time, and won-“ der by what infatuation or caprice they “ could be raised to notice \*.” False or im-“ perfect rules, either established by ourselves, or implicitly received from others, may cor-“ rupt or constrain our taste, and render our decisions

\* Rambler, No 106.

decisions unjust. Had criticism in its infancy fallen into the hands of one in judgment and penetration inferior to Aristotle, a greater number of precarious and unnatural rules than are now admitted, might have long obtained an indisputed authority. A prevailing turn and disposition of mind often makes us unable to relish any thing but what falls in with it, and thus perverts and prejudices our judgment. Hence generally proceeds the depravity of public taste, and the pernicious influence which it has on public entertainments and dramatic works: and hence, in a great measure, the connexion of the taste of a people with their morals.

THESE corruptions of taste can be avoided only by establishing within ourselves an exact standard of intrinsic excellence, by which we may try whatever is presented to us. This standard will be established by the careful study of the most correct performances of every kind, which are generally indeed the most excellent. But though they should only rise to mediocrity, they are fitter for laying the foundation of correctness, than such as are far superior on the whole, but faulty in some particulars: for the greater the beauties, the readier are the faults to debauch the taste. Till it is formed, and has acquired considerable vigour,

gour, it is dangerous to be much conversant with those productions, the virtues of which are eminent, but blended with many faults. The chief utility of criticism lies in promoting correctness of taste. In the most imperfect essays, the authority of the critic will, at least, excite our attention, and provoke our inquiry. But every one who really merits the name, conveys much more momentous instruction, and more effectually teaches justness of thinking, by explaining the kind and degree of every excellence and blemish, by teaching us what are the qualities in things to which we owe our pleasure or disgust, and what the principles of human nature by which they are produced.

CARE, however, must be taken to preserve our taste unconfined, though exact; to avoid that scrupulous formality, often substituted for true correctness, which will allow no deviation from established rules. To disapprove a transgression of a general law, when the spirit is observed, and when the end is, perhaps more effectually, promoted, is not *justness*, but *servility* and narrowness of taste. Who will dislike the landscapes of Poussin, though he has disregarded correctness of drawing in his animals? Parmegiano is said by good judges to owe the inexpressible greatness of manner in his pictures,

tures, to the neglect of just proportion in some of the members of his figures. A contracted taste is chiefly incident to those who would supply the want of natural talents by the drudgery of application. But, in every thing, the neat is essentially different from the finical, the exact from the precise, the regular from the formal.

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## S E C T. VII.

*Of the due Proportion of the Principles of Taste.*

THE last finishing and complete improvement of taste results from the due proportion of its several principles, and the regular adjustment of all its sentiments, according to their genuine value; so that none of them may ingross our minds, and render it insensible to the rest. This is justness and correctness, not confined to the parts of objects, but extended to the whole. Taste is not one simple power, but an aggregate of many, which, by the resemblance of their energies, and the analogy of their subjects, and causes, readily associate, and are combined. But every combination

bination of them will not produce a perfect taste. In all compositions, some proportion of the ingredients must be preserved. A sufficient number of members, all separately regular and well formed, if either they be not of a piece with one another, or be in the organization improperly placed, will produce, not a comely and consistent animal, but an incongruous monster. In like manner, if our internal powers are disproportioned to one another, or not duly subordinated in their conjunction, we may judge well enough of some parts, or of particular subjects, but our taste will be, upon the whole, distorted and irregular.

As an overgrown member, by drawing the nourishment from the rest, makes them weak and puny ; so one of the principles of taste may, by its too great strength, take from the natural force and operation of the others ; and, by attaching us entirely to its own gratifications, render us too little sensible of theirs, though perhaps equally, or more important. If, through an excessive liveliness of imagination, our sentiments of excellence and deformity be too violent, they will so transport us, as to prevent judgment from scrutinizing and comparing them : our taste may be sensible and feeling, but will be incorrect. A mind over fond of sublimity, will despise the less elevated

vated pleasure which results from elegance and beauty. On the other hand, a soul devoted to the soft impressions of beauty, is unable to expand itself into the conception of sublimity. A prevailing relish for the new, the witty, the humourous\*, will render every thing insipid which has not, or cannot, suitably to its nature, have these qualities.

THE want of due proportion is one of the most fertile causes of false taste; and one of the most common sources of that variety of forms

\* Le poëte dont le talent principal est de rimer richement, se trouve bientôt prévenu, que tout poëme dont les rimes sont negligées ne sauroit être qu'un ouvrage mediocre, quoi qu'il soit rempli d'invention, et de ces pensées tellement convenables au sujet, qu'on est surpris qu'elles soient neuves. Comme son talent n'est pas pour l'invention, ces beautés ne sont que d'un foible poids dans sa balance. Un peintre qui de tous les talents nécessaires pour former le grand artisan, n'a que celui de bien colorer, décide qu'un tableau est excellent, ou qu'il ne vaut rien en général, suivant que l'ouvrier a su manier la couleur. La poësie du tableau est comptée pour peu de chose, pour rien même, dans son jugement. Il fait sa decision sans aucun égard aux parties de l'art qu'il n'a point. Un poëte en peinture tombera dans la même erreur, en plaçant au dessous du mediocre, le tableau qui manquera dans l'ordonnance, et dont les expressions seront basses, mais dont le coloris méritera d'être admiré. *Reflex. Crit. sur la Poësie et sur la Peinture, Part 2. § 25.*

forms and modifications which true taste assumes in different persons. Every one has a predominant turn of genius and taste, by which his relish is more adapted to some one species of excellence than to others. This is inevitable, on account of the diversities incident to men in the natural bent of their temper and passions, which always renders them peculiarly accessible to some kinds of gratification or disgust. According as the sublime or the humble passions, the grave or the lively, are predominant in the structure of the soul, our relish will be keenest for the grand or the elegant, the serious or the ludicrous. In this manner, the necessary imperfection of human nature prevents our ever being able to establish a proportion and œconomy of our internal senses, nicely accurate in every respect. A small disproportion is not censured, because it is natural: but, when it exceeds certain bounds, it is acknowledged to degenerate into a partial and distorted form. This distortion is not, however, so much owing to the original excess of one principle as to other causes. *That* lays the foundation of it; but *these* augment the natural inequality, and render it more observable. The principal of these causes is a narrowness of mind, by reason of which we cannot comprehend many perceptions at once, without confusion, nor trace out their relations,

relations, and ascertain their respective moment, without distraction and perplexity. We fix upon a part, we are engrossed by the separate sentiment which it excites, we are blind to the nature of the other parts, or, at least, cannot extend our thoughts so far, as to combine them all into one conception. A due proportion of the principles of taste, presupposes the correctness of each, and includes, additional to that correctness, an enlargement and comprehension of mind.

THAT it may be acquired, all the internal senses must be equally exercised. If, by accidental disuse or perversion, any of them has fallen below its proper tone, it must, by particular attention, be again wound up to it. Habitual exercise promotes an harmonious subordination of the principles of taste, by producing a large compass of thought. It renders ideas and sensations so determinate and familiar, that the largest collections of them find room to lie distinctly exposed to the mental eye; and, at the same time, strengthens judgment to such a pitch, that it can view with ease the most complicated subjects, and decide with accuracy concerning them. Till this enlargement and extensive amplitude of taste is once acquired, our determinations must be essentially defective. Every art has a whole for its

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object: the contrivance, disposition, and expression of this is its main requisite: the merit of the parts arises, not so much from their separate elegance and finishing, as from their relations to the subject; and, therefore, no true judgment can be formed, even of a part, without a capacity of comprehending the whole at once, and estimating all its various qualities.

THOUGH pleasure and pain are counterparts in taste, our sense of them may be disproportioned and unequal. If uneasy and gloomy passions preponderate in the constitution, and form the prevailing temper, they produce a superior proneness to sentiments of disapprobation and dislike. The cheerful and pleasurable affections, on the other hand, diffuse a tincture over all our powers, which makes us much more susceptible of admiration, than of its opposite. This inequality is frequently destructive of true taste. A perfect and faultless performance is not to be expected in any art. Our gratification must in every case be balanced against disgust; beauties against blemishes: before we have compared and measured them, we can form no judgment of the work. For want of the quickness and compass of thought requisite for this, or of inclination to employ it, we often err in our decisions.

cisions. Excellencies and faults are sometimes united in the same part. A member may be so elegantly finished, as to gain the applause of the unskilful; but so unsuitable to its place, so prejudicial to the unity and effect of the whole, as to deserve the severest censure. But in every performance, beauties and blemishes are to be found in different parts. A contracted mind fixes on one or the other. It is related of Apollodorus, an ancient painter, that he destroyed his finest pictures, if he could discover in them any, even the minutest, fault. Some critics, as if they were possessed with the same frantic spirit, will condemn a thousand beauties of the highest rank, on account of a few intermingled faults, which bear no proportion to them, and do not perhaps at all affect the whole. On the contrary, the merit of a single part will strike a more candid judge so strongly, as to make him overlook multitudes of faults, which infinitely overbalance it.

BUT a person of true taste forms his judgment only from the surplus of merit, after an accurate comparison of the perfections and the faults. And indeed the greatest critics \* allow the chief merit, not to the greater *number*, but to the higher *rank* of beauties; not to  
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\* This subject is professedly examined by Longinus,  
*περὶ ὄντος τέλους καὶ καλός*.

that *precision* and constant attention to every trifle which produces a cold and languid mediocrity, but to a noble *boldness* of genius, rising to the height of excellence, with a kind of supernatural ardor, which makes it negligent with regard to numberless *minutiae*; in fine, not to that *faultless* insipidity which escapes our blame, but to that daring *exaltation* which, however shaded by inaccuracies, or even debased by the mixture of gross transgressions, forces our admiration. Demosthenes has been justly preferred to Hyperides, Archilochus to Eratosthenes, and Pindar to Bacchylides. A man should justly expose himself to a suspicion of bad taste, who approved a faultless, uninteresting tragedy, more than Othello, or King Lear; or who gave Waller greater applause than Dryden. Titian has been blamed for incorrectnes of design; but he will ever hold a rank among painters far superior to Andrea del Sarto, who finished all his drawings with the most scrupulous care and diligence. Where eminent merit is found, real taste disdains the malignant pleasure of prying into faults \*.

—*Ubi plura nitent—non ego paucis  
Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,  
Aut humana parum cavit natura.*—

THUS

\* On leur répond qu'un poëme ou un tableau peuvent, avec de mauvaises parties, être un excellent ouvrage, &c.  
*Reflex. Crit. sur la Poësie et sur la Peinture, part 2. § 26.*

THUS we have explained the manner in which the principles of taste must be combined, to form its just extent ; and the finishing which it must receive, in order to its perfection. As it necessarily includes both judgment, and all the reflex senses ; so it must, by culture, be improved in sensibility, refinement, correctness, and the due proportion of all its parts. In whatever degree any of these qualities is wanting, in the same degree taste must be imperfect. Could any critic unite them all in a great degree, to his sentiments we might appeal, as to an unerring standard of merit, in all the productions of the fine arts. The nearer one comes to a complete union of these qualities of taste, the higher authority will his decisions justly claim. But when none of them is wanting, a peculiar predominance of one will by no means vitiate taste. They are so analogous, that an eminent degree of one will supply the place of another, and in some measure produce the same effect : or rather, perhaps, one cannot exist in full perfection, without implying all the rest, at least in an inferior degree. Longinus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Aristotle, all possessed fine taste: but it will scarce be denied, that the first peculiarly excelled in *sensibility*, the second in *refinement*, and the last in *correctness* and *enlargement*. There is none of the ancients, in whom all the four

four appear to have been more equally, or in a higher degree, combined, than in Quintilian.

BEFORE we conclude our researches, it will not be amiss to explain the place which taste holds among our faculties; and to point out its genuine province, and real importance.

P A R T

## P A R T III.

## The Province and Importance of Taste.

## S E C T. I.

*How far Taste depends on the Imagination.*

IT has been observed above, that those internal senses from which taste is formed, are commonly referred to the *imagination*, which is considered as holding a middle rank between the bodily senses, and the rational and moral faculties.

It must be owned, that the vulgar divisions of our faculties are generally superficial and inaccurate. Our mental operations, though of all things the most intimately present to us, are of such a subtle and transitory nature, that, when they are reflected on, they in a great measure elude our view, and their limits and distinctions appear involved in obscurity and confusion. The common distribution of our most obvious powers, our external senses,

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is acknowledged to be faulty: much more may we expect inaccuracy, in the ordinary methods of classing such as are less generally attended to. All divisions of our derived and compounded powers must be liable to error, till the simple qualities from which they proceed have been investigated.

IT sometimes happens, notwithstanding, that, by a kind of natural anticipation, we strike out juster divisions than could have been expected without reflection on the real foundation of them. This holds in the present case. If we will but recollect and compare those qualities of human nature from which taste has been explained, we shall be convinced, that all its phænomena proceed, either from the general laws of *sensation*, or from certain operations of the *imagination*. Taste, therefore, though itself a species of sensation, is, in respect of its principles, justly reduced to imagination.

THAT taste is properly a kind of sensation, can scarce be called in question, by any one who has clear and distinct ideas. It supplies us with simple perceptions, entirely different from all that we receive by external sense, or by reflection. These make us acquainted with the forms and inherent qualities of things external, and with the nature of our own powers  
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and operations : but taste exhibits a set of perceptions, which, though consequent on these, are really different ; which result from, but are not included in, the primary and direct perception of objects. They are however equally uncompounded in their feeling, as incapable of being conceived prior to experience, as immediately, necessarily, and regularly exhibited in certain circumstances, as any other sensations whatsoever \*. Taste is subject-

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\* Indeed, as our external senses are *ultimate* and *original* principles, it may perhaps be taken for granted, that this circumstance is essential to the idea of a sense, and that no power of the mind can be properly expressed by this name; which is derived and compounded, and capable of being resolved into simpler principles. According to this hypothesis, the powers of taste would not be senses. To enquire, whether they are, or are not, may perhaps be deemed a dispute about words, as the determination will depend upon the definition of a sense. It is however of some real moment, that the powers of the mind be reduced into classes, according to their real differences and analogies ; and, therefore, that no definition be received which would disturb the regular distribution of them. And that the powers of taste may, with the greatest propriety, be reckoned senses, though they be derived faculties, will, it is hoped, appear from the following observations. We are directed by the *phenomena* of our faculties, in reducing them to classes. The obvious phenomena of a sense are these. It is a power which supplies us with such *simple* perceptions, as cannot be conveyed by any other channel

ed to the same general laws which regulate our other senses. To trace out all these would

belong to those who are destitute of that sense. It is a power which receives its perception *immediately*, as soon as its object is exhibited, previous to any reasoning concerning the qualities of the object, or the causes of the perception. It is a power which exerts itself *independent of volition*; so that, while we remain in proper circumstances, we cannot, by any act of the will, prevent our receiving certain sensations, nor alter them at pleasure; nor can we, by any means, procure these sensations, as long as we are not in the proper situation for receiving them by their peculiar organ. These are the circumstances which characterise a sense. Sight, for instance, conveys simple perceptions which a blind man cannot possibly receive. A man who opens his eyes at noon, immediately perceives light; no efforts of the will can prevent his perceiving it, while his eyes are open; and no volition could make him perceive it at midnight. These characters evidently belong to all the external senses, and to reflection or consciousness, by which we perceive what passes in our minds. They likewise belong to the powers of taste: harmony, for example, is a simple perception, which no man who has not a musical ear can receive, and which every one who has an ear immediately and necessarily receives on hearing a good tune. The powers of taste are therefore to be reckoned senses. Whether they are ultimate powers, is a subsequent question. Those who are unacquainted with philosophy reckon all our powers ultimate qualities of the mind: but nature delights in simplicity, and produces numerous effects, by a few causes of extensive influence; and it is the business of philosophy to investigate

would be foreign to our subject. We shall mention but one law of sensation, which has been

gate these causes, and to explain the phenomena from them. On inquiry, it appears, that the internal senses are not ultimate principles, because all their phenomena can be accounted for, by simpler qualities of the mind. Thus the pleasure we receive from beautiful forms is resolvable into the pleasure of facility, that of moderate exertion, and that which results from the discovery of art and wisdom in the cause. But, notwithstanding this investigation of the causes of our reflex sensations, we may continue to term them *senses*, since it does not contradict any of the phenomena, on account of which this name was originally bestowed upon them. Beautiful forms have uniformity, variety, and proportion ; but the pleasure they give us, is an immediate sensation, prior to our analysing them, or discovering by reason that they have these qualities. We find, on examination, that uniformity and proportion are agreeable, as they enable us to conceive the object with facility ; and variety, as it hinders this facility from degenerating into languor ; and that all of them are agreeable, as being indications of art and skill ; and thence we conclude, that the pleasant sentiment of beauty is the result of those simple principles which dispose us to relish moderate facility, and moderate difficulty, and to approve intelligence and design ; but the sentiment of beauty arises, without our reflecting on this mixture. This sentiment is compound in its *principles*, but perfectly simple in its *feeling*. If this should seem to imply a contradiction, let it be remembered, that two liquors of different flavours may, by their mixture, produce a third flavour, which shall excite in the palate a sensation as simple as that which

been so often hinted at already, and which, by its immediate effects and its remoter consequences,

which it receives from any of the ingredients. In like manner, the perception of whiteness is as simple as that of any colour; but philosophers know, that, in respect of its cause, it is compounded of the seven primary colours. Lord Verulam (*Nov. Org. lib. 2. aph. 26.*) concludes, from some experiments, that the external sense of taste is compounded of smell and touch. Suppose this conclusion just, taste would be a derived power; but still it would be a distinct sense, as its perceptions are peculiar, and specifically different in this feeling both from odours and tangible qualities. Just so, each principle of taste is with reason accounted a particular sense, because its perceptions, however produced, are peculiar to it, and specifically different from all others. Each conveys perceptions, which, in respect of their feeling, are original, though the powers, by which they are conveyed, are derived. It is scarce necessary to observe, that our ascribing the sentiments of taste to mental processes is totally different from asserting that they are deductions of reason. We do not prove, that certain objects are grand by arguments, but we perceive them to be grand in consequence of the natural constitution of our mind, which disposes us, without reflection, to be pleased with largeness and simplicity. Reasoning may, however, be employed in exhibiting an object to the mind; and yet the perception that it *is*, when the object is once exhibited, may properly belong to a sense. Thus, reasoning may be necessary to ascertain the circumstances, and determine the motive, of an action; but it is the moral sense that perceives it to be either virtuous or vicious, after reason has discovered its motive and its circumstances.

sequences, has so great influence on the sentiments of taste, that it will be proper in a few words to illustrate it. The law of sensation which we have in view, is this: When an object is presented to any of our senses, the mind conforms itself to its nature and appearance, feels an emotion, and is put in a frame suitable and analogous; of which we have a perception by consciousness or reflection. Thus, difficulty produces a consciousness of a grateful exertion of energy; facility, of an even and composed motion of soul; excellence, perfection, or sublimity, begets an enlargement of mind, and conscious pride; deficiency or imperfection, a depression of soul, and painful humility. This adapting of the mind to its present object, is the *immediate cause* of many of the pleasures and the pains of taste which have been pointed out: and, by its *consequences*, it augments or diminishes many others. It is chiefly owing, for instance, to this law of sensation, that we find it difficult to dismiss, at once, any object which hath ingrossed our thoughts, and to turn in an instant to another \*. Every employment of the mind is attended with a correspondent disposition; every object exhibited produces a suitable action of the mind. Now, though

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\* *Difficile est mutare habitum animi semel constitutum.*  
*Quint. Inst. Orat. lib. 4. cap. 2.*

the actions of the mind often succeed one another with surprising quickness, they are not instantaneous : it requires some time to pass from one disposition to another. Every frame of mind has a kind of firmness, tenacity, or obstinacy, which renders it averse to quit its hold. Every sensation or emotion, as much as possible, resists diminution or extinction. Whenever, therefore, we attempt to banish an object which has engaged our notice, the congruous disposition which it had excited tends continually to recal it to our thoughts, and to interrupt our attention to a new object. Nay, farther, even after an object is removed, the frame which it produced, the *impetus* which it gave the mind, continues, and urges us to go on in the same direction ; it requires time and labour to destroy it. For this reason, if the succeeding object demand a different conformation of mind, our application to it must be less vigorous, and its impression fainter : but, if it be analogous to the preceding, it finds the suitable disposition already raised; and therefore strikes the sense with all its force. The influence of this on the sentiments of taste, we have had occasion to remark in many instances. Hence, for example, the mighty efficacy which perceptions acquire in poetry or eloquence, by being introduced in a proper order, and with due preparation. Hence the influence of an habitual

tual and prevailing temper or turn of mind, in enlivening congruous perceptions, and in debilitating such as are incongruous. As far as the sentiments of taste depend on these, or similar principles, so far they arise immediately from the general laws of sensation.

WE can explain our external senses no otherwise, than by marking their differences, reducing them to classes, and delineating the laws of exertion common to all, or peculiar to each. They are original qualities of human nature, not resolvable into any others more ultimate and simple; but taste, in most of its forms at least, as a derivative and secondary power. We can trace it up to simpler principles, by pointing out the mental process that produces it, or enumerating the qualities by the combination of which it is formed. These are found, on inquiry, to be no other than certain exertions of *imagination*. That this may become more obvious, we shall briefly ascertain the nature and extent of imagination, by exhibiting a detail of its principal operations, as far as they concern the present subject.

IMAGINATION is, first of all, employed in presenting such ideas as are not attended with *remembrance*, or a conviction of their having been formerly in the mind. This conviction, which

which we call *remembrance*, is what distinguishes memory from all our other powers of perception. When I see any object, a ship suppose, for the first time, sense alone is exercised in perceiving it ; when I think of a golden mountain for the first time, imagination alone is employed ; when I see the ship again, and know that I had seen it before, memory is exercised about it, in conjunction with sense ; when I think of the golden mountain a second time, and perceive that I had thought of it before, then memory, as well as imagination, is exerted. Imagination exhibits ideas of many objects which we never perceived, the conception of which, therefore, cannot be attended with remembrance. But even things which we have often formerly perceived, and which are most familiar to us, may be thought upon without our reflecting that we have perceived them formerly : we can simply conceive heat or cold, light or colour ; or we can consider them, not as what we perceived in time past, but as what we may hereafter perceive. In this case, they are presented, not by memory, but by imagination.

MEMORY exhibits its ideas in the same form and order which belonged to the things perceived by sense. But the defect of remembrance in the ideas of imagination, as it prevents our referring them to their original sensations,

sations, dissolves the natural connexion of their parts. But when *memory*, has lost their real bonds of union, *fancy*, by its associating power, confers upon them new ties, that they may not lie perfectly loose ; and it can range them in an endless variety of forms. When I recollect a city which I have lately seen, and conceive the several objects belonging to it, in the same order and positions in which I saw them ; this is the work of memory. Several years after, I try to form an idea of the same city ; I have forgotten many particulars ; imagination attempts to supply the defects of memory, and forms a picture of it in many respects different from the truth, varying the magnitudes, the distances, and the order of the objects : if I have occasion to visit it afterwards, I become sensible of this, and am surprised to find how great a part of my conception was the mere creation of fancy. When I hear of a city which I never saw, I endeavour to conceive it, and imagination gives its parts certain proportions, and combines them in a certain form.

MANY of the combinations of ideas which imagination produces, are representations of nothing that exists in nature ; and therefore whatever is fictitious or chimerical is acknowledged to be the offspring of this faculty, and

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is termed *imaginary*. But wild and lawless as this faculty appears to be, it commonly observes certain general rules, associating chiefly ideas of such objects as are connected by the simple relations of *resemblance*, *contrariety*, or *vicinity*; or by the more complex ties of *custom*, *co-existence*, *causation*, or *order*. It sometimes *presumes*, that ideas have these relations, when they have them not: but generally it discovers them where they are: and by this means it becomes the cause of many of our most important operations \*.

WHERE-EVER fancy supposes, or perceives in ideas, any of the uniting qualities just now mentioned, it readily, and with a kind of eagerness, passes from one idea to its associates. Thus, the picture of a friend transports the mind in an instant, by means of resemblance, to the conception of that friend; and it introduces the recollection of many particulars in his character and conduct, by means of the relation which they bear to him as their cause.

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\* For instance, some ideas are of such a nature, that whenever they occur, they impel to action. It is by making such ideas frequently occur, by constantly suggesting them, in consequence of the associating power of *custom*, that repetition produces the constant tendency and proneness to a particular action which is an essential part of every *active habit*.

This effect might be illustrated by many obvious examples, with respect to all the associating qualities. Ideas to which they belong, are often so strongly connected by the imagination, that they become almost inseparable, and generally appear together. When one of them is conceived, no force can prevent the other from rushing into the mind. Many instances of this are observable every day; particularly in the prejudices, the attachments, and the antipathies of men: and there have occurred, in the former parts of this essay, many instances of objects which please, or displease taste, only, or chiefly, by means of ideas which are associated with them, and suggested by them; as in the sublimity of works of art, and in several kinds of beauty.

ONE of the most natural and immediate effects of association is, that, especially when the relation of ideas is close, and their union consequently strong, the transition from one to the other is so easy, that the mind takes in a long train of related ideas with no more labour than is requisite for viewing a single perception, and runs over the whole series with such quickness, as to be scarce sensible that it is shifting its objects. Hence it arises, that before we take notice of our having begun to wander, we often find, that we have departed very

very far from the subject which we were considering, and on which we perhaps did our utmost to keep our attention fixed : and when we set ourselves to inquire, how this has happened, we can sometimes recollect a succession of many ideas, which have passed through the mind with so great facility, that we did not at all observe them. Nay, we sometimes pass so easily from one perception to another which it suggests, that it requires pains to make us sensible of the former. We attend little, for instance, to the sounds or characters of a language which we perfectly understand ; our whole attention is bestowed on the things signified by them. Many of the perceptions of sight which suggest ideas of tangible qualities, are never almost reflected on. This easy transition from one perception to others associated with it, has been discovered to have a very extensive and multifarious influence on the sentiments of taste. Whenever our pleasure arises from ideas associated with an object, and suggested by it, it is their being instantaneously suggested that renders the object striking ; and very many of the pleasures of taste are of this kind : were force necessary for bringing them into view, it would disturb the operations of the soul, and destroy all our pleasure. We scarce at all perceive the excellencies or the blemishes of a poem or oration written in a language

language which we understand but imperfectly: the difficulty which we find in passing from the words to the thoughts expressed by them, prevents the exertion of the powers of taste. In painting, if the features, the attitudes, and the disposition of the figures, do not suggest the subject very quickly, and without tedious study, taste becomes dull, and the pleasure is lost.

IMAGINATION proceeds a step farther. When a number of distinct ideas are firmly and intimately connected, it even combines them into a whole, on account of the facility with which all the groupe is taken in, and considers them as all together composing only one perception. This is the origin of all our complex perceptions. It is fancy which thus bestows unity on number, and unites things into one image, which, in themselves, and in their appearance to the senses, are distinct and separate. By this operation too, fancy has great influence on taste: for all the objects that affect taste, and excite its sentiments, are certain forms or pictures made by fancy, certain parts or qualities of things which it combines into complex modes.

IDEAS which are thus compounded, or which are, even without composition, only associated, communicate,

communicate, by the closeness of their relation, their qualities to one another. A perception, by being connected with another that is strong, or pleasant, or painful, becomes itself vigorous, agreeable or disagreeable. The parts of complex perceptions are so intimately united, that the generality seldom reflect on their being distinct ; and philosophers cannot analyse them without some study and attention. We are accustomed to consider them all as making but one perception ; they are all in the mind at once ; and therefore we cannot naturally distinguish from what precise part of a complex perception a particular sentiment results, but must ascribe the sentiments arising from any of the parts to the perception in general. When a perception communicates its qualities to another introduced by it, the reason of the phænomenon is obvious from the principles which we have established. The disposition with which the mind contemplated the first, has a degree of firmness which makes force requisite to destroy or change it ; the strength of the union which transports the mind easily from the one perception to the others, keeps this force from being applied : the disposition, therefore, which the first produced, continues while we view the others ; and we imagine, by a kind of illusion, that they produced the disposition which, in reality, was brought to the perception of them ;

them; and we ascribe to them the qualities which are necessary for its production. Finally, a perception weak, or indifferent in itself, is sometimes rendered strong, or pleasant, or painful, by its introducing an idea which has these qualities. A perception which is indifferent, may, notwithstanding, be fit to engage our attention, either on account of those which accompany it, or on account of the effects of those qualities of things which it represents, or for some other reason. Thus perceptions of touch, which are neither pleasant nor painful, engage our attention, because of the great dependence which our welfare or our hurt have on the tangible qualities of bodies. But a perception which is indifferent, excites no emotion; and the indifference with which it was contemplated, is readily swallowed up by any emotion that happens to succeed it. In this case our attention continues fixed on the perception itself; but the frame with which it was contemplated, is scarce felt, and is quickly forgotten. On the other hand, a perception may be such as in itself we are not apt to attend to, and yet may, by its strength, its agreeableness, or its disagreeableness, excite a very sensible emotion, which engages our notice, and remains for some time in the mind. Now, when a perception of the first kind introduces one of the second kind, the frame with

with which the former perception is conceived, and the latter perception itself, are disregarded; and the former perception, and the emotion excited by the latter, being the principal objects of our notice, we naturally conjoin them, and ascribe the emotion to that perception which did not really excite it, but only introduced its immediate cause. From the fitness of associated perceptions to communicate their qualities, particularly their strength or vivacity to each other, arises, in a great measure, the force of sympathy, which enlivens our *ideas* of the passions infused by it to such a pitch, as in a manner converts them into the passions themselves, and which affects the perceptions of taste in many instances formerly remarked.

IF indeed the connected perceptions have such a degree of relation as unavoidably leads us to compare them, the phænomenon that has been mentioned will be reversed, the effect of the *comparison* overbalancing that of the *association*. A perception will appear less strong, less pleasant, or less painful, than it really is, by being introduced by one which possesses a greater degree of these qualities, if it is at the same time compared with it.

IMAGINATION sometimes operates so strongly, as not only to associate, or even combine, but

but also to confound together ideas or sensations that are related, and to make us mistake one for the other. This is the cause of our often ascribing the pleasure or the pain which results merely from our own operations, to the objects about which they happen to be employed ; and of our confounding together objects or ideas which are contemplated with the same or a like disposition. It is likewise the source of many figures in which one thing is used for another, as metaphor, denomination, abusion, and the like.

IMAGINATION does not confine itself to its own weak ideas ; but often acts in conjunction with our senses, and spreads its influence on their impressions. Sensations, emotions, and affections, are, by its power, associated with others, readily introducing such as resemble them, either in their feeling or direction. Nay, they are capable of a closer union than even our ideas ; for they may not only, like them, be *conjoined*, but also *mixed* and blended so perfectly together, that none of them shall be distinctly perceptible in the compound which arises from their union. Hence the effects so often mentioned, of concomitant emotions.

ALL these are operations of imagination, which naturally proceed from its simplest exertions ;

tions ; and these are the principles from which the sentiments of taste arise. That these sentiments arise from imagination, does by no means imply, that they are fantastical, imaginary, or unsubstantial. They are *universally* produced by the energies of fancy, which are indeed of the utmost consequence, and have the most extensive influence on the operations of the mind. By being compounded with one another, or with other original qualities of human nature, they generate most of our compounded powers. In particular, they produce *affection* and *taste* of every kind ; the former, by operating in conjunction with those qualities of the mind which fit us for action ; the latter, by being combined with the general laws of sensation.

S E C T.

## S E C T. II.

*Of the Connexion of Taste with Genius.*

**T**ASTE may be considered either as an essential part, or as a necessary attendant of genius, according as we consider genius in a more or less extensive manner. Every one acknowledges, that they have a very near connexion. It is so evident, that it has almost passed into a maxim, That the ablest performers are also the best judges in every art. How far the maxim is just, will best appear, by briefly determining the nature and principles of genius.

THE first and leading quality of genius is *invention*, which consists in a great extent and comprehensiveness of imagination, in a readiness of associating the remotest ideas that are any way related. In a man of genius, the uniting principles are so vigorous and quick, that, whenever any idea is present to the mind, they bring into view at once all others that have the least connexion with it. As the magnet selects, from a quantity of matter, the ferruginous particles which happen to be scattered through it, without making an impression on other substances; so imagination, by a similar

similar sympathy, equally inexplicable, draws out from the whole compass of nature such ideas as we have occasion for, without attending to any others ; and yet presents them with as great propriety, as if all possible conceptions had been explicitly exposed to our view, and subjected to our choice.

AT first, these materials may lie in a rude and indigested chaos : but when we attentively review them, the same associating power which formerly made us sensible of their connexion, leads us to perceive the different degrees of that connexion ; by its magical force ranges them into different species, according to these degrees ; disposes the most strongly related into the same member ; and sets all the members in that position which it points out as the most natural. Thus, from a confused heap of materials, collected by fancy, genius, after repeated reviews and transpositions, designs a regular and well-proportioned whole \*.

THIS brightness and force of imagination throws a lustre on its effects which will for ever distinguish them from the lifeless and insipid productions

\* This operation of genius, in designing its productions, is described with all the beauties of poetical expression, in *The Pleasures of Imagination*, B. 3. ver. 348.  
to 410.

productions of inanimated industry. Diligence and acquired abilities may assist or improve genius : but a fine imagination alone can produce it. Hence is derived its inventive power in all the subjects to which it can be applied. This is possessed in common by the musician, the painter, the poet, the orator, the philosopher, and even the mathematician. In each, indeed, its form has something peculiar, arising either from the degree of extent and comprehension of fancy ; or from the peculiar prevalence of some one of the associating qualities ; or from the mind being, by original constitution, education, example, or study, more strongly turned to one kind than the other.

A GENIUS for the fine arts implies, not only the power of invention or design, but likewise a capacity to express its designs in apt materials. Without this, it would not only be imperfect, but would for ever lie latent, undiscovered, and useless. It is chiefly the peculiar modification of this capacity, which adapts a genius to one art rather than another. To form a painter, the ideas assembled by fancy must give him a view of their correspondent objects, in such order and proportion as will enable him to exhibit the original to the eye, by an imitation of its figure and colour. To form a poet, they must lead the thoughts, not to

to the corporeal forms of things, but to the signs with which, by the common use of language, they are connected ; so that he may employ them with propriety, force, and harmony, in exciting strong ideas of his subject.

CULTURE may strengthen invention ; knowledge is necessary for supplying a fund from which it may collect its materials ; but improvement chiefly affects the capacity of expression. Painting requires a mechanical skill, produced by exercise ; music, a knowledge of the power of sounds, derived from experience ; poetry and eloquence, an acquaintance with all the force of words and instituted signs, an advantage which can be obtained only by careful study.

THUS genius is the grand architect which not only chuses the materials, but disposes them into a regular structure. But it is not able to finish it by itself. It needs the assistance of taste, to guide and moderate its exertions. Though the different relations of the parts, in some measure, determine the form and position of each, we acquire much ampler assurance of its rectitude, when taste has reviewed and examined both the design and execution. It serves as a check on mere fancy ; it interposes its judgment, either approving

ving or condemning ; and rejects many things which unassisted genius would have allowed.

THE distinct provinces of genius and taste being thus marked out, it will be easy to discover how far they are connected. They must be connected in a considerable degree, since they both spring from imagination : but as it is differently exerted in each, their connection will not be perfectly accurate and uniform.

GENIUS is not always attended with taste precisely equal and proportioned. It is sometimes incorrect, though copious and extensive. It is sometimes bold, yet can transfuse no delicacy or grace into its productions. But it is never found where taste is altogether wanting. The same vigour of the associating principles which renders genius quick and comprehensive, must bestow such strength on the several dependent operations of fancy which generate taste, as shall make that faculty considerably active and perceptive \*. The genius

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\* There is in one view a still closer connexion between genius and taste. A genius for the fine arts implies, at least, *sensibility* and *delicacy* of taste, as an essential part of it. By means of this, every form strikes a man of true genius so forcibly, as perfectly to entrap-ture and engage him, and he selects the circumstances proper for characterising it, and impresses them upon others, with the same vivacity that he apprehends them himself.

of the greatest masters in every kind has not been more perfect than their taste. The models they have given are so finished and correct, that the general rules and precepts of the art, afterwards established by critics, are deduced from their practice, and the very same which they observed, though uninstructed. The epos was not subjected to rules when Homer composed the Iliad. Aristotle did not write his *Art of Poetry*, till after the greatest tragic poets of antiquity had flourished. These great originals possessed not only an excellent genius, but equal taste. The vigour of their imaginations led them into unexplored tracks ; and they had such light and discernment, as, without danger of error, directed their course in this untrodden wilderness. Taste, united with genius, renders the effects of the latter like to diamonds, which have as great solidity as splendour \*.

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himself. See this elegantly explained in *A discourse on poetical imitation*, § 1.

\* Le bel esprit est de la nature de ces pierres précieuses, qui n'ont pas moins de solidité, que d'éclat. Il n'y a rien de plus beau qu'un diamant bien poli et bien net ; il éclate de tous cotes, et dans toutes ses parties.

*Quanta sodezza, tanto ha splendore.*

C'est un corps solide qui brille ; c'est un brillant qui a de la consistance et du corps. 4. *Entret. d'Ariste et d'Eugene.*

BUT taste often prevails where genius is wanting ; they may judge, who cannot themselves perform. The operations that depend on the imagination, may be vigorous enough to form a high relish, though it be destitute of that brightness and extension which is necessary for a comprehensive genius. The associating principles may be strong and active within their bounds, though these bounds be narrow. And soundness and strength of judgment may be possessed without considerable genius ; but must always, if joined with any degree of the internal senses, produce acuteness and justness of taste. This rendered Aristotle the greatest of critics, though he was not, like Longinus, *blest with a poet's fire.*

IT must however be acknowledged, that genius will always throw a peculiar brightness upon taste, as it enables one, by a kind of contagion, to catch the spirit of an author, to judge with the same disposition in which he composed, and by this means to feel every beauty with a delight and transport of which a colder critic can form no idea. The fine genius of Longinus catches fire, as it were, from the mentioning of a sublime passage, and hurries him on to emulate its sublimity in his explication of it. Quintilian, by the same union of genius with taste, delivers his sentiments

ments with the utmost elegance, and enlivens the abstractness of precept by the most beautiful and apposite figures and images.

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## S E C T. III.

*Of the influence of Taste on Criticism.*

**A**S taste gives the last finishing to genius in the *author* or performer, so it is the fundamental ingredient in the character of the *critic*. The greatest refinement and justness of taste is necessary, but not alone sufficient, to qualify one for this office. A critic must not only *feel*, but possess that accuracy of discernment, which enables a person to *reflect* upon his feelings with distinctness, and to explain them to others.

TASTE perceives the particular beauties and faults, and thus supplies the facts for which we are to account, and the experiments from which our conclusions are to be deduced. But these conclusions cannot be formed without a vigorous abstracting faculty, the greatest force

force of reason, a capacity for the most careful and correct induction, and a deep knowledge of the principles of human nature. One does not merit the name of a critic, merely by being able to make a collection of beauties and faults from performances in the fine arts ; to tell in general, that those please, these displease ; some more, some less. Such particular observations fall as much short of genuine criticism, as a collection of facts and experiments does of philosophy ; or a series of newspapers of a system of politics. They are its rude materials, and nothing more. And to exhibit them is the whole that taste can do.

IN order, therefore, to form an able critic, taste must be attended with a philosophical genius, which may subject these materials to a regular induction, reduce them into classes, and determine the general rules which govern them \*. In all this operation, respect must be had

\* *Nihil est quod ad artem redigi possit, nisi ille prius, qui illa tenet, quorum artem instituere vult, habeat illam scientiam, ut ex iis rebus, quarum ars nondum sit, artem efficere possit.* — *Omnia fere, quæ sunt conclusa nunc artibus, dispersa et dissipata quandam fuerunt, ut in musicis,* — *in hac denique ipsa ratione dicendi.* — *Adhibita est igitur ars quædam extrinsecus ex alio genere quod sibi totum philosophi assumunt, quæ rem dissolutam, divulsamque conglutinaret, et ratione quadam constringeret.* *Cic. de Orat. lib. 1.*

had to the subjects in which the excellencies or blemishes reside, and to the similitude of the qualities themselves, or of the sentiments which they excite. These are the circumstances common to a variety of particular phænomena, which must regulate our distribution of them. It is not enough to discover that we are pleased or displeased ; we must ascertain the precise species of either ; and refer it to the sentiment or the expression ; to the design or the execution ; to sublimity or beauty ; to wit or humour.

THE qualities common to the lower classes will naturally be determined first, by regular induction. But a true critic will not rest satisfied with them. By renewing the induction, and pushing it to a greater degree of subtlety, he will ascertain the less conspicuous properties, which unite several inferior species under the same genus \* ; and will carry on his analysis, till he discovers the highest kinds, and prescribes the most extensive laws of art, and thus arrives at the most universal distinctions  
that

\* *Tum sunt notanda genera, et ad certum numerum paucitatemque revocanda. Genus autem est id, quod sui simileis communione quadam, specie autem differentiis, quas aut plureis complectitur parteis. Partes autem sunt, quæ generibus iis, ex quibus emanant, subjiciuntur.* *Cic. ibid.*

that can be made, without falling into the un-instructive affirmation of mere excellence or faultiness in general \*.

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\* This order of proceeding from the more particular to the more general distinctions of our sentiments, may, perhaps, seem liable to an objection drawn from matter of fact : for it would appear, that critics have determined the most universal classes, but have not yet sufficiently ascertained the species that are subordinate to them. The common defect with which they are charged is, that their observations are too general. This is undoubtedly the case, as criticism has been generally managed : and the reason is, that it has been seldom cultivated by a regular and just induction. It was long ago observed by Lord Verulam, that there are two kinds of induction ; one imperfect and insufficient, which leads us at once from experiments to the most general conclusions ; the other legitimate and perfect, but scarce ever used, which rises gradually from less general, to more general principles. “ *Duae viæ sunt, atque esse possunt,*  
“ *ad inquirendam et inveniendam veritatem. Altera*  
“ *a sensu et particularibus advolat ad axiomata, maxi-*  
“ *me generalia, —— atque hæc via in usu est. Altera*  
“ *a sensu et particularibus excitat axiomata, ascendendo*  
“ *continenter et gradatim, ut ultimo loco perveniat ad*  
“ *maxime generalia ; quæ via vera est, sed intentata.*”

*Nov. Org. lib. I. aph. 19.* In criticism, as well as in philosophy, the former method has been generally practised. Indeed, in whatever regards sentiment, there is a peculiar temptation to pursue this course. For the very feelings excited by qualities that belong to different *genera*, being sensibly distinct, direct men, in some measure, to distinguish them, though not with sufficient precision.

To complete the criticism, and render it truly philosophical, the common qualities of the several classes, both superior and subordinate, must be compared with the principles of human nature, that we may learn by what means they please or displease, and for what reason.

ALL this is included in perfect criticism, which requires therefore the greatest philosophical acuteness, united with the most exquisite perfection of taste. If taste is wanting, our conclusions must be defective, faulty, or precarious ; if philosophical genius, our observations will be trifling, superficial, unconnected, and perplexed with too great particularity.

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cision. But it requires attention and acuteness to mark the smaller varieties of sentiment, which correspond to the species of each. The matter of fact objected only shows, therefore, that criticism has been cultivated by a wrong method of induction. The consequence has been, that even those general distinctions which appear to be ascertained, are loose, uncertain, and ill defined ; a defect that can never be remedied, till the other sort of induction be applied, and critics be contented to rise from particular principles, gradually, to such as are more general. Thus only can our conceptions of all the sentiments of taste, and of the qualities by which they are excited, be rendered accurate and determinate.

IT has often been observed, that nature is the standard and archetype of all true rules of criticism. Indeed the fate of criticism has been similar to that of every species of philosophy: It has fallen into the hands of incapable professors, who, without any regard to the truth of nature, have attempted to prescribe rules formed by their own imaginations. The accidental usage of an eminent author on a particular emergency, has been converted into a standing law, and applied to cases no-wise similar: arbitrary restraints have been imposed without necessity, and even shining faults have been recommended as beauties. But these false systems of criticism, like their kindred ones in philosophy, have obtained only a local and temporary reception. Genuine criticism is evidently very different; and is justly esteemed a faithful transcript of nature. For it investigates those qualities in its objects which, from the invariable principles of human nature, must always please or displease; describes and distinguishes the sentiments which they in fact produce; and impartially regulates its most general conclusions according to real phænomena.

## S E C T. IV.

*Of the Objects of Taste.*

WE have seen the importance of taste, both to the performer, and the judge. But its proper office and extensive influence will perhaps appear still farther, by considering its objects in a light somewhat different. It may be conceived as employing itself about *nature, art, and science*. With regard to nature, which is the common subject of the other two, taste and reason are employed in conjunction. In art, taste is the ultimate judge, and reason but its minister. In science, reason is supreme, but may sometimes reap advantage from using taste as an auxiliary.

As reason investigates the *laws* of nature, taste alone discovers its *beauties*. It fills us with admiration of the stupendous magnitude of the mundane system. It is charmed with the regularity, order, and proportion, which every part of that system displays, even to the most illiterate ; with the beauty and variety of colours which tinge the face of nature ; with the fitness and utility of all its productions ; with the inexhaustable diversity and endless succession of new objects which it presents to

to view. Flowers disclose a thousand delicate or vivid hues. Animals appear in comely symmetry. Here the ocean spreads forth its smooth and boundless surface ; there the earth forms a verdant carpet. Mountains rise with rugged majesty ; the valleys wear a pleasant bloom ; and even the dreary wilderness is not destitute of august simplicity. The day is ushered in by a splendid luminary, whose beams expose to view the beauties of the world, and gild the face of nature. And when the curtain of night veils terrestrial objects from our eye, the wide expanse appears spangled with stars, and opens the prospect of multitudes of worlds past reckoning. Spring, summer, autumn, present us with natural beauties, in the successive periods of their growth ; and even stern winter leaves many objects undestroyed, from which a vigorous taste may extract no inconsiderable degree of entertainment.

SCARCE any art is so mean, so entirely mechanical, as not to afford subjects of taste. Dress, furniture, equipage, will discover a good or bad taste : nay, the lowest utensil may be beautiful or ugly in the kind \*. But the finer

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\* In how great a degree the beauty of these meaner subjects is regulated by the same principles, from which that of the nobler springs, appears in many instances produced by Mr Hogarth, in his *Analysis of beauty*.

arts, which imitate the excellencies of nature, supply it with more proper materials, and thence derive their merit. Music, painting, statuary, architecture, poetry, and eloquence, constitute its peculiar and domestic territory, in which its authority is absolutely supreme. In this department, genius receives its decrees with implicit submission ; and reason is but its minister, employed to bring into view, and reduce into form, the subjects of which it is to judge.

THE sciences are susceptible, not only of truth or falsehood, but also of beauty or deformity, excellence or defect. As the former are primarily regarded, reason, by which they are distinguished, here reigns supreme, and is the immediate and proper judge of merit. Taste exercises only a subordinate jurisdiction, and must be employed in subservience to understanding. When this subordination is perverted, and taste is principally regarded, erroneous theories are introduced : Imagination is substituted for reason; prejudice supplies the place of evidence ; plausible fables are embraced instead of solid truths. An immoderate attachment to novelty or antiquity, to sublimity or simplicity, has often in science given rise to whimsical principles, and distorted explications of the phænomena of things. To one or other

other of these causes we may ascribe most of the systems of false philosophy that have ever prevailed in the world.

BUT taste, when under the entire control of reason, and used only as its assistant, is highly useful in science. It judges, not only of the manner in which science is communicated, but also of the matter itself. Every just conclusion, by extending our knowledge of nature, discovers some new beauty in the constitution of things, and supplies additional gratification to taste. The pleasure which attends the perceptions of this faculty, strongly prompts us to exert reason in philosophical inquiries, and, with unremitting assiduity, to explore the secrets of nature, that we may obtain that pleasure. By its approbation, it confirms the deductions of reason, and, by making us feel the *beauty*, heightens our conviction of the *truth*, of its conclusions. The Newtonian theory is not more satisfying to the understanding, by the just reasonings on which it is founded, than agreeable to taste, by its simplicity and elegance. As the operations of taste are quick, and almost instantaneous, it is sometimes disgusted with the bungling appearance of principles, and leads us to suspect them, before reason has had time to discover where the falsehood lies. A king of Spain, who had made considerable progress

gress in astronomy, is said to have been highly disgusted with the confusion and perplexity in which the Ptolemaic system involves the motion of the celestial bodies. His *reason* submitted to that hypothesis ; but his *taste* disliked it. Instead of censuring the constitution of nature, he should have suspected the explication which represented it as irregular, and ill contrived. When the mundane system is truly explained, it appears to be adjusted with the nicest regularity and proportion ; the sense of which at once confirms the theory, and fills us with admiration of the supreme wisdom.

S E C T.

## S E C T. V.

*Of the Pleasures of Taste.*

THE observations which we have made concerning the subjects of taste, not only ascertain its genuine province, but likewise, in some measure, evince its extensive utility and importance. It will not, however, be improper to complete our view of its advantages, by considering its effects, both immediate and remote.

It is the *immediate* source of pleasures, not only innocent, but elegant and noble. The powers of imagination are a striking instance of the munificence of our Creator, who has furnished us, not only with those faculties which are necessary for the preservation of our being, but with such also as may fit us for receiving a rich variety of enjoyment. And by the improvement of these powers, our pleasures may be still farther multiplied, and rendered more exquisite. A fine taste qualifies a man for enjoyments to which others are perfect strangers, and enables him to derive entertainment from almost every thing in art or nature. It enlarges his sphere of happiness, by yielding delights which employ the mind without

without fatiguing it, and gratify without cloying.

THE pleasures of taste, though less improving than such as are intellectual, are often as great, generally more rapturous, always more universally attainable. We need but attend, and they are infused by every object, without labour or expence of thought. The beauties of nature are open to all: and though few can have the *property*, most men may have the *enjoyment*, of many of the wonders of art. The improvement of taste is easier, and more certain, than that of reason. Some are indeed incapable of the highest perfection of it: but few are so entirely destitute of the natural seeds of it, as not to receive some pleasure from its proper objects. Though all cannot attain such *justness* of discernment as may qualify them for being judges, or gain them authority as critics; there are scarce any who may not acquire the *sensibility* that is requisite for their own gratification.

THE pleasures of taste are not, like the gratifications of external sense, followed by uneasiness or satiety, nor reflected upon with dissatisfaction. They are confessedly of an higher order. A relish for them adds dignity to a character, and commands no inconsiderable degree

degree of esteem. A man who devotes a considerable part of his time to the gratification of sense, is an object of contempt or indignation : but a person who can fill up with pleasures of taste, those parts of life that afford no opportunities for social offices, who can find entertainment for many hours in a gallery of pictures, or in a collection of poems, is esteemed on this very account. Justness of taste procures an author as high a degree of reputation, as the most curious abstract disquisitions. Aristotle's critical works are more generally valued than his logic. To the latter he owed the veneration of his implicit followers ; a veneration which free inquiry has already extinguished : but on account of the former, all ages will probably admire him.

THE sentiments of taste spread a lustre over most of our enjoyments. The pleasures of sense and the external decorations of life would be insipid and despicable to every man of understanding, if ideas of elegance and magnificence, derived from taste, were not associated with them. Taste stamps a value upon riches, as the procuring of its gratifications is the great end for which they are desired, and the worthiest use to which they can be applied, the execution of benevolent and virtuous designs alone excepted.

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## S E C T. VI.

*Of the Effects of Taste on the Character and Passions.*

THE more remote advantages of taste arise from the influence which it has on the passions and the character.

THE passions, as well as taste, depend for their production on the *imagination*; and may therefore reasonably be expected to bear some analogy to it. Were it proper to enter on a full discussion of the origin of the passions, it might be shown, not only that they derive their existence, their particular turn, and their various degrees of strength, from the operations of fancy, but also that they owe them, in many instances, to the very same operations of fancy which produce the sentiments of taste. Fancy forms the pictures which affect taste, by compounding several distinct ideas into one whole; and these same pictures excite the passions. *Association* has a very great influence on taste; and every philosopher who has examined the affections with tolerable care, has remarked the great dependence which they have on association. Many of them arise from

from *sympathy*; and this principle is likewise the source of many sentiments of taste. Both our sentiments and our affections are often rendered more intense by the mixture of concomitant emotions. A strong imagination produces a vigorous and lively taste; and it is always attended with keen and ardent passions.

THUS taste and affection are effects of the same cause, streams issuing from the same fountain; and must therefore be in a considerable measure similar. They likewise mutually influence one another, and hence derive a farther similarity. We have remarked already, that the prevailing passion often enlivens the sensations of taste, and determines its particular form. Taste as often augments the vigour of the passions, and fixes their prevailing character. Present a mere abstract idea of good or evil, the mind feels no emotion. Mention a particular advantage or disadvantage, desire or aversion, joy or sorrow is immediately roused. Tell us that a man is generous, benevolent, or compassionate, or, on the contrary, that he is sordid, selfish, or hard-hearted; his general account of his character is too indefinite to excite either love or hatred. Rehearse a series of actions in which these characters have been displayed, immediately the story draws out the affections correspondent.

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It is only a perception enlivened by fancy, that affects our active powers. A very general idea is so unstable, that fancy cannot lay hold of it : but when a particular idea is presented, the imagination dwells upon it, cloaths it with a variety of circumstances, runs from it to other ideas that are connected with it, and finishes such a picture of the object represented by that idea, as will infallibly produce a suitable affection. Now, if we examine the colours which imagination throws upon our ideas, in order to enable them to excite the passions, we shall find, that the greatest part of them are extracted from the sentiments of taste. Honours have a great influence on most men ; but greatest on those whose taste is of such a nature as to give them a high relish of the magnificence and pomp which the possession of honours naturally procures. There is scarce any quality that recommends a person more strongly to our friendship, than a fitness for gratifying our taste in some way or other. A genius for music or painting will sometimes more speedily and certainly introduce a stranger to the notice or good offices of a man who is a tolerable judge in these arts, than more important accomplishments of which he is equally qualified to judge. A sense of beauty has generally much greater influence upon the amorous passion, than the mere appetite for sensual

sensual pleasure; and is sometimes so powerful, as even to overbalance, in our choice, the natural approbation of agreeable mental qualities. An elegant entertainment is prepared, not to satisfy hunger, but to please fancy. We may perhaps venture to assert, that every appetite and passion in our nature, except avarice alone, or the love of money for the sake of hoarding, derives its origin and its vigour, in a great measure, from those ideas which imagination borrows from taste, and associates with the object of that passion. This being the case, the passions will naturally receive one tincture or another, in every man, according to the particular constitution of his taste.

WE find, by experience, such a connexion between the tastes and the passions of men, as these observations would lead us to expect. Great sensibility of taste is generally accompanied with lively passions. Women have always been considered as possessing both in a more eminent degree than men. Quickness of taste is essential to poetic genius; and Horace has assigned to poets the correspondent turn of passion, when he characterises them *genus irritable*. A gross, uncultivated taste produces a grossness and indelicacy of passion: but where-ever a delicate taste prevails, it bestows a certain refinement and elegance on our

our principles of action, which makes us despise many objects as gross and coarse which vulgar minds pursue with ardour; and even when we are attached to the very same things with other men, it gives a peculiar politeness to our manner of affecting them. Savages have a grossness both of taste and of passion, which distinguishes them from civilized nations. The vulgar in every nation are distinguished by the same circumstance from the polite. Whatever quality gives a tincture to the taste of a nation, is found to tinge also the national character. The French have a peculiar delicacy of taste: and a peculiar vivacity and elegance runs through their manners. The irregularity and boldness of the English taste corresponds exactly with the general spirit of the nation. The stateliness which the Spaniards affect in their behaviour, is analogous to the loftiness which they approve in composition. It is no difficult matter to trace a like connexion between taste and character in individuals.

THIS connexion may be owing, in some measure, to the influence which the passions have on taste. But it can scarce be doubted, that it arises as frequently from the tincture which taste gives to the passions; especially when

when we recollect, that the ideas which excite the passions are, in a great measure, derived from the sentiments of taste.

If it should farther appear, that a just and well regulated taste has a peculiar tendency to confirm virtuous affections and principles, its importance would be still more conspicuous. Those who have inquired, whether it has this tendency, seem to have run into extremes. Some represent those qualities in actions and affections which excite our moral approbation, as the same with those qualities which, in a picture, or a poem, produce the gratification of taste; and think that it is the same faculty which is pleased in both cases\*. But experience will scarce support this opinion. A taste for the fine arts, and a high sense of virtue, which, on this hypothesis, would be the same, are often separated: and a careful examination of the moral faculty, would probably lead us to derive it from other principles than those from which taste has been explained. There seems, however, to be as little reason for determining, with others, that taste has no influence upon morality†. It may be separated from virtue; it may accidentally lead men to act

\* This is often asserted, or very plainly insinuated, by Lord Shaftesbury. See *Characteristics, passim.*

† This opinion is maintained by Mr Brown, *Essay on Characteristics*, § 7.

act viciously, for its gratification : but, that it is naturally more favourable to virtue than to vice, may be inferred from many of the acknowledged qualities of the human mind.

Most wrong passions may be traced up to some perversion of taste which produces them, by leading us to misapprehend their objects. It would be almost superfluous to undertake a formal proof, that luxury, prodigality, ambition, arise chiefly from this cause. And it is evident, that if taste were perfectly formed, so as to discover that it is a false beauty or sublimity, or at least an inferior species, that belongs to these vices, or their objects ; and if it were accustomed to the purer and nobler subjects about which it may be employed, those ideas which now mislead so many, must lose a great part of their influence upon them. Vice is often promoted by taste ill formed or wrong applied : let taste be rendered correct and just, vice will be almost extinguished ; for our opinions of things will be, in most cases, true, and suited to their natures.

A MAN who is acquainted with high and noble pleasures, naturally despises such as are far inferior. A relish for the gratifications of taste will enable a man, in some degree, to undervalue the pleasures of sense, and to disregard

gard the calls of appetite, which are the greatest obstructions to the prevalence of good affections. A man of an improved taste puts very little value on sensual delights, except so far as they come to him recommended by an opinion of elegance. And it has been already observed, that a perfectly just taste would enable him to strip this recommendation, in a great measure, of its force.

ANY sentiment, or affection, which is suitable to the prevailing bias of the mind, will derive peculiar strength from that bias. A just and elegant taste, frequently employed, puts the mind into an habitual disposition, more congruous to the agreeable feeling, and gentle impulses, of kind affection, than to the more tumultuous agitations of the rougher passions. The exercise of taste begets serenity and satisfaction. When these prevail, the mind is prone to benevolence. This affection finds the mind already in a temper suited to it; and it strikes deep its roots, as in a soil which supplies it with its natural nourishment, in great abundance. A man is seldom better disposed to friendship, generosity, love, and the whole train of kind affections, than when his mind has been softened by the charms of music, painting, or poetry. It is universally acknowledged, that these arts, when properly applied,

applied, are very powerful in recommending virtue. And their power arises, in a great measure, from the circumstances which we are now considering. Their immediate gratifications, by producing a congruous disposition, prepare the mind for being deeply impressed with the moral sentiments and affections which they are fitted to insinuate.

ALL the principles of the human mind have so near a connexion, that one of them can scarce be considerably altered, but it produces a similar alteration in the rest. A vigorous taste, not only is affected with every the minutest object, directly presented to it ; but imparts also a peculiar sensibility to all the other powers of the soul. Refinement of taste makes a man susceptible of delicate feelings on every occasion ; and these increase the acuteness of the moral sense, and render all its perceptions stronger and more exquisite. On this account, a man of nice taste will have a stronger abhorrence of vice, and a keener relish for virtue, in any given situation, than a person of dull organs can have, in the same circumstances. Hence it proceeds in part, that many actions are reckoned either virtuous or vicious by civilized nations, which to savages appear perfectly indifferent. This may rather be ascribed to an elegance of taste gradually introduced

duced by society, than to any peculiar disposition to virtue. The moral sense is, in savages, so dull, that the qualities of these actions are imperceptible to them, and their sentiments in other instances are weak in proportion. Civilized nations have delicacy sufficient to perceive moral qualities in actions, which make no impression on a savage; and this delicacy renders more vigorous, in proportion, the perceptions which they have from those actions that are approved or disapproved by savages themselves. Thus the cultivation of taste gives new force to the sentiments of the moral faculty, and by this mean renders it more powerful to repress the vicious passions, and support the virtuous.

IT is likewise to be observed, that, though taste and the moral sense are distinct powers, yet many actions and affections are fit to gratify both. What is virtuous and obligatory is often also beautiful or sublime. What is vicious may be, at the same time, mean, deformed, or ridiculous. A man whose taste is uncultivated, has no motive in these cases, but what arises from the moral principle. A person of improved taste, not only has this in its greatest strength, but is capable of additional motives derived from taste; and having thus a double impulse, must be more strongly

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prompted than the other. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that some vices appear sublime or elegant, and may therefore be recommended by taste. But they always have these qualities in a less degree than the opposite virtues. Superiority to external things is nobler than ambition. Admiration of these vices, therefore, implies a defect of just taste. Where this faculty is perfect, it always prefers virtue to vice.

IN order to give the foregoing observations their full weight, it is necessary to remember, that many different causes concur in forming the characters of men. Taste is but one of these causes ; and not one of the most powerful. It is not therefore to be expected that the character should be, in every instance, perfectly analogous to the taste. Other causes may counteract the influence of this principle, and render the turn of the passions, dissimilar to its structure. On this account, examples of a good taste joined with gross passions, or a vicious character, are far from being sufficient to prove that taste has no connexion with morals. This heterogeneous composition may be otherwise accounted for. All our conclusions concerning human nature must be founded on experience : but it is not necessary, that every conclusion should be *immediately deduced* from experiment.

experiment. A conclusion is often sufficiently established, if it be shown that it necessarily results from general qualities of the human mind, which have been ascertained by experiment and induction. This is the natural method of establishing synthetical conclusions; especially where an effect is produced by a complication of causes. This is the case in the subject of our present inquiry. The character and the passions are affected by many different causes, of which taste is one. Taste in the fine arts may appear to be wanting in some men, because they have had no opportunities of exercising it on subjects of that kind; while, at the same time, the natural principles of it being vigorous, and all men being conversant about the objects of affection, it may bestow a delicacy and refinement on the character. Affection may disguise the passions, imitation may render them unsuitable to the turn of taste, habit may make them run counter to it; but taste has, notwithstanding, a natural tendency to influence them.



## P A R T IV.

## Of the Standard of Taste.

## S E C T. I.

*That Differences of Taste are unavoidable.*

THERE is doubtless considerable difficulty in determining, what are the general qualities which gratify taste, and what it is that constitutes perfection of taste: but the difficulty is wholly of that kind which attends every accurate investigation, especially on an abstruse or delicate subject; as soon as the investigation is completed, the conclusions produce a full conviction of their truth. Few will entertain a doubt, whether novelty, sublimity, beauty, skilful imitation, and the like, are the qualities on which we fix our attention, and from which we derive our pleasure, when we survey the works of nature or the productions of human art. It will likewise be acknowledged without hesitation, that the perfection of taste consists in delicacy and justness, or more particularly,

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in sensibility, refinement, correctness, and the due proportion of its several principles.

BUT when we come to compare the taste of one man with that of another, we meet with difficulties of a different sort, which cannot be resolved so easily, nor in a manner so convincing. Though all agree that beauty pleases, it may still remain a question, whether beauty does or does not belong to this or that object; and it is a question which it seems often almost impossible to find the means of answering. Of what importance is it for deciding in any one instance, that correctness and delicacy are universally confessed to be perfections of taste? For which is the correct taste, or which the delicate? What one approves as correct, another censures as insipid or enervated; what one admires as delicate, another pronounces viciously refined, and a third perhaps blames as not altogether free from coarseness. The tastes of different men seldom coincide perfectly: and when they disagree, by what rule can we determine, to which the preference is due? The general principles may be rendered unexceptionable; but in applying them to particular cases, there is room for an endless variety of sentiments.

THAT there is a very great diversity of tastes among mankind, is plain from every day's experience;

perience ; that this diversity must always continue, is no less plain from reflection on those principles of the mind, by the operation of which the several perceptions of taste are produced.

ON every subject, in every point of view, the taste of one man obviously differs from that of another. In painting, some are pleased with correctness of design, some with richness of invention, and some with beauty of colouring. The excellence of music has been placed by some in simplicity, by others in a kind of rich variety; and others have put the highest value on those compositions which surprise the ear and display masterly execution. Some prefer the subtle, close, and nervous style of eloquence ; others the more diffuse and copious manner of popular declamation. Every species of poetry, and every mode of poetical composition has had its patrons. Many have admired the sublimity and spirit of the ode ; a great writer insinuates that he looks upon it as only harmonious extravagance \*. It has been made a question, whether an epic poem or a tragedy be the greatest work ; each side of the question has had advocates of undoubted

\* Voici les Lyriques, que je méprise autant que je fais cas des autres, et qui sont de leur art une harmonieuse-extravagance. *Lettr. Persan.* 121.

ed taste and judgment. Every age has something peculiar, which distinguishes its taste, in dress, in manners, and in arts, from that of other ages. What is highly approved in one nation, is perfectly repugnant to the taste of another the most contiguous to it. The irregularities of Ariosto cannot prevent his being the favourite poet of his countrymen; the more artificial and connected plan of Tasso has determined most foreigners to give him the preference. Those theatrical entertainments which yield high pleasure to a Frenchman, appear insipid and uninteresting to an Englishman; and what suits the taste of the latter, would often shock the refinement of the former. The oriental stile in writing, is reckoned inflated and fantastical, by Europeans; and the simplicity of composition which prevails in Europe, would be no less censured by an inhabitant of Persia or Indostan.

THE constitution of human nature renders this variety of tastes inevitable. It must be produced both by an original inequality and dissimilitude in the powers whose combination forms taste, and by the different degrees and modes of culture which have been bestowed upon these powers.

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Most of those internal senses which belong to taste, are exerted by the intervention of an external organ ; and all men are not precisely alike in any of their external organs. There are eyes which can scarcely distinguish one colour from another : such eyes must render a person unfit for being a judge of painting, at least so far as colouring is concerned, in whatever degree of perfection he may possess the internal principles of judging. A person whose sight is feeble or obscure, cannot discern, and therefore cannot approve that variety and multiplicity of ornaments, which gives high pleasure to a person indued with acuter or distincter sight. To a very quick sense of hearing, that degree of sound will be painful, which gives music only the strength and fulness fit to gratify a duller organ.

BUT the original differences lie chiefly in the internal senses, or in those mental processes by which the sentiments of taste are produced. For instance, a degree of difficulty in conceiving an object, which is only sufficient to give one person a grateful feeling of exertion, may fatigue another, and render either novelty or variety in some cases unpleasant to him. On the contrary, a degree of facility which pleases one, may sink another into langour, and make uniformity or simplicity disgusting. This very

difference of constitution leads the bold and active spirit to chuse and to delight in a severity of exercise, a bustle of business, or an application of thought, which would overwhelm an indolent and feeble mind : the quick change of companies and the incessant round of diversions, which is no more than enough to give play to the vivacity of the gay, would be a torinent to persons of a more sedate turn ; and the tranquility in which these latter find their enjoyment, would be insupportable to the former.—All the sentiments of taste have a great dependence on association ; and must derive immense variety from the endless diversity which takes place, in the strength of the associating principles, in their particular modifications and combinations, in the tracks to which they have been most accustomed, in the nature and the number of accessory ideas which they connect with the objects of taste.—Men differ much in sensibility of heart ; and therefore must feel differently and judge differently, in all those cases in which the perceptions of taste are affected by the warmth or the coldness of the heart.—Men have very unequal measures of sagacity and quickness in inferring design and mental qualities from sensible appearances and effects ; and consequently must differ in their tastes, in all the numberless cases, in which their pleasure has any dependence

dependence on such inferences ; where-ever, for example, the gratification results from a perception of the dexterity of the artist, where-ever the passions are expressed by bodily features or attitudes, where-ever character is indicated by delicate touches.—They have very different degrees of skill in comparing, and are prone to very different sorts of comparison ; and therefore must be differently affected in all those cases, in which the pleasure arises from a perception of the relation of the parts to the whole, or of the means to the end, from imitation, or from a comparative view of different objects.

THE perceptions of each of the internal senses, are the result of these and the like mental energies ; and they must be in every man duller or livelier, stronger or weaker, distincter or more confused, according to the perfection or the imperfection of those energies, by the combination of which they are produced. On this account it cannot be expected that any one of the internal senses should be equally good in all men. The internal senses which belong to taste are many ; and each of them is distinct from the rest, in respect both of its principles and of its objects : they are generated by different mental processes ; and they are adapted to the perception

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on of different subjects or of different qualities of the same subject. A man may be well turned to those processes which generate one of the powers of taste, and consequently perfect in it, while he is defective in another, by being naturally ill-disposed to those processes which should produce it. Hence different men will excel in different sorts of taste, and be chiefly attached each to a peculiar set of subjects and qualities. This must introduce a variety and dissonance into their decisions. One man is principally struck with novelty, another with grandeur, another with beauty, another with harmony, another with the ludicrous; and each gives the preference to that which makes the strongest impression on himself. Many of the forms of judgment, likewise, enter into the operations of taste; and no two men are perfectly similar in their powers of judgment.

THE original diversities of taste, in this manner great and unavoidable, cannot fail to be increased by the very unequal degrees and dissimilar modes of exercise and culture, which it receives in the several individuals: these would be sufficient to produce diversity, though the powers of taste had been naturally uniform in all. In the bulk of mankind, these powers receive no culture: engrossed by attention to the

the necessaries of life, attached to pursuits remote from the pleasures of the imagination, or by some other means deprived of opportunities of exerting the internal senses, their taste remains wholly unimproved; or rather the elements of taste which nature implanted in their souls, are extinguished, as seed, by being buried so deep as to prevent its vegetating, is corrupted and lost. Every difference in the degree of exercise, which taste receives, produces a difference in the degree of improvement which it reaches: every difference in the manner of conducting its exercises, occasions a correspondent peculiarity in its structure. If a person has access only to a few of those objects which draw forth the powers of taste, and give them vigour, his sentiments are formed upon these objects; they are confined to the qualities which these exhibit, they cannot coincide with the sentiments of those men who have taken a wider range, who have been conversant with a greater variety of objects, and from the contemplation of them have derived more extensive views. A man who has spent his life in an uncultivated country, may have a high relish of the rude magnificence and wild sublimity of nature, but cannot even conceive the beauties of a rich and highly improved country; and when he is first introduced to them, amidst all his admiration of regularity

gularity and fruitfulness, he feels disgust in the absence of the grand, though rough and barren, scenes which have been familiar to him. There are many instances of persons who have visited the finest countries in the world, returning to their native mountains, and, from the peculiar taste which they had early acquired, as well as on account of other attachments, giving them the preference to the most delightful regions. It is in nations where the fine arts have been pursued and carried to perfection, or where the productions of great masters abound, that taste in these arts becomes elegant and just. By accustoming himself to attend only either to the noble, or to the graceful, a man may render himself almost incapable of relishing the other. By confining his application to one of the fine arts, or by having opportunities of surveying productions only in that one art, a man may become an accurate judge in it, while he has no taste in the sister arts; a nice judge of poetry, is not necessarily a judge in painting, in music, or in architecture; he may either have no relish for them, or he may have a perverted relish. Our sentiments, as well as our opinions, are liable to be warped by prejudice: the sentiments of taste have, in every man, a distinctive tinge, derived from the peculiarities of his temper, his passions, his situations, and his habits.

S E C T.

## S E C T. II.

*That there is notwithstanding a Standard of Taste.*

IT is the variety of tastes obvious in mankind, that renders it necessary to enquire concerning a standard of taste. But the variety is so great as to render it difficult to fix a standard; and even doubtful, in the opinion of some, whether any standard can be fixed. Either we must allow that all these different and opposite tastes are equally good, or we must acknowledge that some of them deserve the preference, and that there are means of determining, which these are. The former supposition seems to have been so generally admitted, as to have passed into a proverb, That tastes are not to be disputed: yet it is too wild to be seriously admitted by any, in its full latitude. It would imply that every man is to himself an infallible judge of beauty and deformity, of excellence and defect; it would imply that the same objects, and the same qualities of objects, may merit at once approbation and disgust; it would imply that our natural principles of taste, unlike to all the rest both of our mental faculties, and our bodily powers,

powers, are incapable of being either improved or perverted ; it would infer that it is absurd to censure any relish, however singularly gross ; it would put all critical discussions precisely on a level with Don Quixote's dissertations on giants and enchantments. The proverb, though frequently expressed, is never steadfastly or consistently adopted. Its authority is sometimes urged by persons whose sentiments are called in question ; but it is disregarded by the same persons, whenever they are disposed to call in question the sentiments of others. If they be at a loss, by what principles to support a decision which they have given, if they be unwilling to own that they have judged wrong, or to use the means of acquiring greater justness and delicacy of sentiment, they take shelter in the received maxim ; they plead that this is their taste, and they have a right to indulge it. But there is no man who does not think himself entitled to find fault with the taste of another in some particular instances ; and to find fault with any taste, necessarily implies the acknowledgement of a right and a wrong, and of a standard by means of which they may be distinguished ; without taking this for granted, we could never dream of finding fault ; but if *any* taste can be wrong, *none* has a claim to absolute authority, merely on account of its being taste.

taste. However frequently the indisputable equality of tastes may be retailed without examination or attention to its meaning, however frequently it may be applied to conceal want of taste, to disguise the perversion of it, or to excuse negligence in improving it ; yet every man makes it evident at times, that he gives no credit to the maxim, that he knows some of the sentiments of taste to be right, others to be wrong ; and that he admits some criterion by which, in some cases at least, they may be discriminated.

THERE is one situation in which we are peculiarly prone to admit the maxim which has been mentioned : when sentiments are very different, we readily acknowledge that a preference is due to one of them ; but when the difference between them is inconsiderable, we are disposed to allow the same authority to both. It is not difficult to discover the cause of this inconsistency. There is scarcely any state of mind more uneasy, than that in which it is solicitous to determine a point, and yet finds it impossible to determine to its own satisfaction : it hangs in painful suspense between opposite judgments. It is in this state, when it attempts to decide between turns of taste which differ but a little ; it is involved in perplexity ; it is distracted by contrary principles

plies of nearly equal force ; it can find nothing in which it may rest with perfect acquiescence : It is eager to fly from this uneasiness ; but finds no other means of flying from it, but to persuade itself, that there is no preference due to either turn, that each has an equal and an indisputable authority, and that consequently there is no room for a decision. When a taste differs widely from our own, we do not hesitate to pronounce it barbarous and unnatural ; it is when the difference is more minute, that we recur to the infallibility of sentiment. In this case we allow ourselves to admit sophistry, that we may banish suspence. It will by no means follow that the taste of one man is not juster than that of another, because we cannot easily decide, to which the preference is due, or because, when we give a preference, we cannot produce incontestible proofs of the rectitude of our judgment. In matters of science, opposite opinions may be supported by arguments of such equal plausibility, that a man who is not perfectly acquainted with the subject, cannot satisfy himself, to which of them he ought to yield assent ; yet one of these opinions may be notwithstanding true, and the other false. In like manner, there may be a good and a bad in taste, though you be at a loss to pronounce, in a particular case, where it precisely lies ; and you may be convinced  
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that there is, though your propensity to dispel disagreeable suspense inclines you to stifle your conviction, and to suppose for a moment, that there is no certain criterion in the case.

IT has been common to consider the pleasures of taste as belonging to the imagination. Perhaps this has contributed to introduce the opinion, that taste cannot be reduced to any fixed standard. We are disposed to regard the imagination as an irregular and lawless power, the parent of whatever is fantastical and capricious. We acknowledge the pleasures and the pains of the external senses to be something real and substantial, for the perception of which there is an unalterable foundation in the constitution of our nature. But the pleasures of taste are thought to have no such permanent foundation: they are derived only from fancy; they depend on a particular turn of imagination, which cannot be expected to be the same in all men, which springs up without a sanction from reason, and again changes without its allowance, a new whimsy driving out the old. But this reasoning can have weight only with superficial thinkers. It is true that mere fancies, and these too absurd and preposterous, have been sometimes undeservedly honoured with the name of taste, as in the ever-varying modes of dress, equipage, and

and furniture : yet even in these trivial subjects, every thing is not wholly arbitrary ; there are fixed principles of propriety, on which one mode may be approved and another condemned : and in the genuine province of taste, in the sublimer field of nature and the fine arts, though it be certain, and though it has been a great part of our business to prove, that almost all the sentiments of taste are derived from certain exertions of the imagination, it is equally certain, and has been proved with the clearest evidence, that these exertions are as little capricious, as regular, as universal, and subject to as fixed laws, as the exertions of any other principle in the human constitution.

AN argument against the possibility of fixing a standard of taste, has been drawn from the very nature of sentiment. Sentiment, it is said, has not, like judgment, a reference to any thing beyond itself, nor represents any quality inherent in the external object : it implies only a certain congruity between that object and the faculty by which it is perceived ; this congruity does certainly take place whenever the sentiment which indicates it is felt ; and consequently the sentiment cannot be false or wrong \*. This argument, however plausible,

\* *Hume's Dissertation on the Standard of Taste.*

sible, has no solidity. For, *first*, Suppose it true that our sentiments mark some congruity between certain objects and our faculties, and nothing more ; it will not follow that every sentiment is necessarily right, or that one taste may not be preferable to another. If this account of sentiment be just, it must be applicable to all our sensations, as well as to those of taste ; but it is readily acknowledged concerning every one of the external senses, that in one man it is more acute than in another ; and, therefore, it ought to be acknowledged, that one man may possess taste in greater perfection than another. One eye is more piercing, one ear more quick, one palate, one smell, or one touch, more delicate than another ; and there are, in most cases, infallible means of determining, to which the superiority belongs : and why should we hesitate to own, that one taste is superior to another ? or why despair of discovering some means of ascertaining which of them is the superior ? There may be a congruity between an object and our organs, which undeniably implies a defect or imperfection in the latter : darkness agrees best with weak eyes ; but this very conformity is a proof of their weakness. In like manner, the conformity of some objects to a man's taste may be such as shews it to be weak and imperfect. But, *secondly*, The supposition on  
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which the argument proceeds, is not strictly true. Sentiment implies something more than a congruity between objects and our organs. It is not a *copy* of any thing exterior ; but it is the *result* of it : it is not an *image* of a quality inherent in the object ; but it is the natural *effect* of it : and when a quality acknowledged to belong to an object, fails of producing its natural and usual effect upon a particular person, the failure indicates a deficiency or perverseness in that person's organs. *Thirdly*, Taste implies judgment, as well as sentiment : and therefore, it must, in some respects at least, refer to something beyond ourselves, and be either right or wrong, according as it is conformable or not conformable to that external standard.

TASTE may be considered in two different lights, the not distinguishing between which, has embarrassed the question concerning a fixt criterion of its sentiments, and bestowed some degree of plausibility on the assertion of the indisputable authority of every taste. It may be considered either as a species of *sensation*, or as a species of *discernment*. In the former light, it is mere feeling and perception ; it is touched and affected by certain objects, and attaches us to them immediately and without reflection ;

tion ; it is simply the faculty by which we receive pleasure from the beauties, and pain from the faults and imperfections of those things about which we are conversant. In the other light, it is a faculty by which we distinguish the true causes of our pleasure or of our dislike ; by a reflex act, it discerns the several qualities which are fit to excite pleasure or disgust ; it estimates the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction which every object ought to produce. Taste considered in the former of these lights, in respect of what we may call its *direct exercise*, cannot properly admit any standard. The feelings of every man depend, in a great measure, on the original structure of his mind, which is unalterable : they depend on the precise degree and mode of improvement which his natural powers have received ; while this remains the same, his feelings must also continue what they are ; they can be changed only by a variation in the state of his improvement ; but it is not possible that all men should either have the same opportunities of improving taste, or make the same use of the opportunities which they have. It is not, therefore, possible, that all men should be equally pleased, or that they should be pleased with precisely the same things. But notwithstanding this, there may be a standard of taste in respect of its *reflex acts* : and it is only in respect of these, that

that a standard should be sought for. A standard of taste is not something by which all tastes may be reconciled and brought to coincide: it is only something by which it may be determined, which is the best among tastes various, contending, and incapable of coinciding perfectly. It is so far from being impossible to discover a standard which may answer this purpose to the impartial, that a standard may be found, to which even they whose relish it condemns, may find themselves obliged to submit. The person who *feels* in a certain manner, and who cannot, by any means, bring himself, at present, to feel in a different manner, may yet be convinced that he feels amiss, and yield readily to a *judgment* in opposition to his feeling. This happens even with regard to the external senses. A person may perceive in himself an unconquerable antipathy to a particular species of food; and yet, if he can trace its origin to an accidental disgust, he will not, on account of his antipathy, pronounce that food either unwholesome or unpalatable, he will not be surprised that other men are fond of it, but on the contrary believe, that himself also should have been fond of it, if he had not happened to contract an unreasonable prejudice against it. There are persons who dislike particular colours: but these may sometimes be sensible that their dislike proceeds from a groundless

groundless association ; and though it has taken so fast hold of their imagination, that they cannot get the better of it, yet they may be far from pretending that that colour ought to be generally disliked, may be disposed to give credit to those who say that they perceive it beautiful, and even able to discover a strong foundation for their judgment. In like manner, a man may be sensible, that his not receiving pleasure or disgust in the fine arts, does proceed, in particular instances, from an imperfection in his organs, from want of opportunity of improving his taste, or from a prejudice which he has contracted ; and, from consciousness of this, may be ready to acknowledge that, in these instances, his own taste is false and of no authority, and that the very different taste of another deserves the preference. One who has a bad musical ear, is not surprised that he perceives not either the excellencies or the defects of a tune, or that he blunders in endeavouring to trace them out ; but, disregarding his own feelings, appeals to, and acquiesces in, the decision of those whom he confesses to be better judges. One who has never had access to study the works of the great masters in painting or sculpture, will naturally be diffident of his own taste in these arts, disposed to pay a deference to that of others, who have had superior opportunities,

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and cautious of forming a decision concerning the merit of performances, upon his own feelings, however lively they may be. We often find persons candid enough to decline passing judgment, and to own that they cannot pronounce with impartiality, not only concerning the conduct, but also concerning the works of a particular person, on account of their friendship for the author, or their enmity against him.

NOR needs it to appear absurd to assert, however oddly it may sound, that in some instances, “a man *ought not* to be pleased when he is, or *ought* to be pleased when he is not \*,” that this may be evinced on solid principles, and that he himself may be convinced of it. This is precisely similar to every case in which reason and reflection are said to correct the reports of the senses. It is well known to philosophers, that many perceptions are ascribed to sight which really belong to touch, that all men think they see certain qualities of bodies, ideas of which only, are, in consequence of habit, suggested by visible appearances. Reason can demonstrate this; but the demonstration can have no influence even on the philosopher in the moment of sensation; he perceives just like other men; and, till

\* *Elements of Criticism*, chap. 25.

till he happens to reflect, thinks that he sees the tangible qualities of bodies. Just so, a man may have feelings in the fine arts, which he knows to be wrong, and which his knowing them to be wrong, cannot hinder his continuing to have. This is a remarkable difference between sentiment and opinion : no man can hold an *opinion* for a moment after he has discovered it to be false ; but a man may clearly perceive a *sentiment* to be wrong, and yet find it for a long time impossible to abandon it. The firmest conviction of reason cannot prevent a perverted sensation ; it must, in spight of that conviction, continue to be received, till the natural peculiarity or the habit which occasions it, be corrected by proper exercise and culture. Men, therefore, who are affected differently, may notwithstanding judge alike : and men who judge differently, may admit some common principles which serve as a test of both their judgments. Actually to reconcile the feelings, or even the discernment of all men, in matters of taste, is impossible : but it is not therefore impossible to find the means of determining which is sound, which not, and of estimating the degree of excellence or imperfection which belongs to each ; or, in other words, to investigate the true standard of taste.

S E C T.

## S E C T. III.

*That the Standard of Taste cannot be ascertained  
by explaining away Diversities of Sentiment.*

IT is of small importance to evince, that some of the sentiments of taste may be called in question, or that one taste may deserve to be preferred to another, unless we can likewise find some criterion by which it may be determined in every case, which are the faulty sentiments, and which the decision that has authority, and ought to be submitted to. There cannot be an *external* standard by the application of which the merit of different tastes may be compared, as quantity is measured by feet and inches, and the excess, the defect, or the proportion of one quantity to another, precisely marked. The standard of taste must be something *internal*; it must be derived from some general qualities of taste itself, or from general principles of human nature. It will be universally allowed, that these are to be investigated and ascertained in the same way as all the other principles of the mind, by experience and observation. But all have not pursued the investigation on the same plan, and therefore have adopted different conclusions.

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THE elegant author of the *Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*\*, brings the question to a quick decision, by maintaining, that the differences of taste are only apparent, and that all men, in effect, perceive nearly in the same manner. So far as the senses are concerned in exhibiting the perceptions of taste, these perceptions must be pretty much the same in all men; for, without contradicting experience and introducing absolute scepticism, we must suppose the conformation of the bodily organs, and consequently the manner of perceiving objects by means of them, and the pleasures and pains thence resulting, to be nearly similar in all men: and though custom and other causes produce some deviations from the natural pleasures and pains of sense, yet all men distinguish these from the acquired; and every man's senses are like those of other men in most respects, and vitiated only in some points. So far as the perceptions of taste can be referred to the imagination, they arise either from images of sensible objects, or from imitation: in exhibiting the former, imagination being only the representative of the senses, it must be pleased or displeased on the same principle as they are, and consequently must be as similar in different men; in being pleased with resemblance,

\* *Introduction on Taste.*

resemblance, all men are pretty equal, as far as their knowledge of the things compared extends ; and though in this knowledge there be considerable differences, arising from the variety of accidental situations, these produce not properly a difference of taste. Judgment is the only remaining source of the perceptions ascribed to taste ; and it gives us the same degree of certainty with respect to the imitative arts, as with respect to morals and the science of life, and in fact produces a closer agreement in matters of taste than in matters of science. On the whole, the *principles* of taste are entirely uniform, but men possess very different *degrees* of these principles.

If all this were strictly true, there would be no need to enquire concerning a standard of taste, for there would be no real differences to be adjusted. But it cannot be meant, that the sentiments of all men concerning the individual objects of taste presented to them, are the same. The expressions used by the author, seem often to imply this ; but the contrary is evidently acknowledged in many of the illustrations brought to evince, that men who form very different judgments concerning individual objects, yet judge on the same general principles. It is undeniable that their judgments are not only apparently, but really different ;

ferent ; nay it is, not without reason, observed by an ingenious author \*, that the difference is greater in reality than in appearance, because the sentiments of men with regard to beauty and deformity, are discordant, while their general discourse is the same, and they all use the same words importing praise or blame, but affix very different meanings to them. A perfect or a near uniformity of tastes in mankind, can be reasonably asserted in no other sense than this, That all the sentiments of taste are ultimately resolvable into certain general principles, which all men possess in common ; which may therefore be referred to, as a fixed standard of taste ; and the want or perversion of any of which renders a man in that respect monstrous, and unfit to be reasoned with in the case. This position is just ; but the manner in which this author endeavours to ascertain the general principles of taste, seems to be liable to several exceptions. It will be readily acknowledged, that the original perceptions of the external senses are almost the same in all men, that they are distinctly remembered, and continue to be easily distinguished from all adventitious perceptions, and that they form an obvious standard for determining which is the sound and natural state of the senses. But this is by no means applicable

\* *Hume's Dissert. on the Standard of Taste.*

applicable to taste. If it were, we must maintain that the rudest and most uncultivated taste is the standard ; for all sentiments which imply a refinement and enlargement of taste, are evidently acquired and adventitious, not original ; and consequently would be, not natural, but deviations from nature. The reason of the difference is, that our external senses are at first formed complete and perfect, but taste is an improveable faculty, the elements of which only we bring into the world with us. Again, though it were acknowledged that the perceptions of the external senses are perfectly uniform in all men, it would not follow that the sentiments of taste, so far as they proceed from the imagination, are likewise uniform ; for it is not true, that the imagination, in presenting images, is only the representative of the senses : it can vary to infinity, the disposition of the perceptions which we have received from them ; and consequently it presents numberless images, which the senses could not possibly exhibit, and which give pleasure or disgust on totally different principles. In imitations also, a difference in the knowledge of the things compared, is not the only cause of a variety of sentiments : differences in the propensity to comparison, and in the skill of comparing, and discerning likenesses, unavoidably produces diversity of sentiments in those whose knowledge is the same.

S E C T.

## S E C T. IV.

*That general Approbation is not the immediate Standard of Taste.*

OTHERS, acknowledging the variety of mens tastes, in relation to individual objects, to be real, have supposed that a standard may notwithstanding be inferred *immediately* from experience of their judgments concerning these objects \*. Some things have pleased universally, in all countries and in all ages: these possess the true and universal beauty. There are other works, concerning the merit of which there is not an universal agreement: these are to be estimated according to the judgment of the majority. Whatever is universal among mankind, must be natural to them; whatever is general, must likewise be reckoned natural, though there be found some exceptions. What is natural to any species, we necessarily regard as right, and every deviation from it in individuals, we reckon an

F f                    imperfection.

\* Considerable stress is laid on a standard in this manner formed, by two ingenious philosophers of our own country. *Hume's Discert. 4. Elements of Criticism*, cap. 25. And it is explicitly defended as the *only* standard by the ingenious Abbé du Bos, *Reflex. Crit. 2. part, sect. 21,—32.* See also *Fitzosborne's Letters*, 39.

imperfection. We conclude, therefore, without hesitation, and without imagining it necessary to enquire farther for reasons in support of the conclusion, that whatever has pleased the taste of mankind universally, or even generally, is, from the original and fixt constitution of human nature, calculated to please, and the contrary to displease; that they will produce their respective effects wherever the mind is in a sound state; and that when they fail of producing them in a particular instance, it must be owing to some defect or imperfection in the organ or in the structure of the mind. But in collecting from experience, what is the common nature of man, or the sound state of the mind, with respect to matters of taste, we are not to consult the feelings of every individual. Many, by being confined to incessant labour for the necessaries of life, or by being engaged in pursuits which give all their thoughts a different direction, are prevented from ever bestowing the smallest attention on productions in the fine arts; in many, taste has not received sufficient culture by education, practice and reflection; in many, its native relish has been perverted by prejudices, by injudicious imitation, wrong habits, corruption of manners, and the like; some are naturally void of taste, or remarkably defective in its principles: all these are to be excluded, in forming our judgment

judgment of what generally pleases or displeases in the fine arts. The sentiments of those only are to be taken into the account, who have a good natural taste, who have not allowed it to be vitiated, who have improved it by study or conversation, and by such extensive acquaintance with works of imagination, as enables them to compare one with others, and to judge of its relative as well as of its intrinsic merit: and the sentiments, even of persons thus qualified, are to be regarded with respect to a particular work, only when they have come to the examination of it with serenity of mind, in a disposition fit for giving its several beauties and blemishes their due influence upon them; when they have examined it with attention; when they have studied it deliberately, and surveyed it in every different point of view. In this manner, the persons whose sentiments deserve regard in the present question, are reduced to a small number; among these there is almost a perfect uniformity of judgment; and their concurrence determines the merit and the rank of every work. The number of capable judges varies likewise according to the nature of the work which comes under their cognizance; fewer can form a judgment concerning the Iliad or the Æneid, than concerning a modern poem in their native language; fewer concerning a picture

picture than a poem ; and in some places and some periods, the capable judges in any art are much fewer than in others. When a new work appears, the judgment of the public concerning it, remains for some time in suspense, but it never fails to be pronounced at last, according to the real merit of the work ; and it either fixes it in its just reputation, or condemns it to oblivion. Some of the beauties or of the faults of a work may escape the notice of many at first, but they cannot escape the notice of all ; by those who have observed them, they are pointed out to others ; and being attended to, they come to be generally acknowledged. All tastes are not equally alert ; as some eyes see at a greater, and some at a less distance, so one taste perceives more quickly, another more slowly, and in both cases objects appear differently, when they are first exhibited ; but after each has surveyed the objects in that light, and from that station which suits his organs, their perceptions are in both cases reconciled. Some may be prejudiced for or against a work ; but they are so few in comparison with the whole public, that their voice is scarcely heard, and cannot prevent its passing an impartial sentence. A spirit of party, or other temporary or local circumstances, may give a vogue to an insipid work which coincides with them, or obstruct

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the reception of a work of merit, which runs counter to them : but it is only for a while ; these circumstances quickly cease, and then the former is treated with just contempt, or totally forgotten, and the latter rises to its deserved rank in the general estimation. There are always some men eminent for strength, improvement, and impartiality of taste ; and their sentiments gradually diffuse themselves among the rest, and are approved and adopted. The judgment of the public thus derived from sentiment, from the effect which they feel that a work has upon them, from experience of its fitness or unfitness to please, is to be regarded as the general sense of mankind, and is the only test and standard of merit and demerit in the fine arts. Works which have been disapproved, after a deliberate examination, by contemporaries, have seldom risen to a high reputation among posterity ; and works deliberately approved at their first appearance, have never been disapproved afterwards, though their being succeeded by performances of far superior merit, has occasioned their gaining less applause than they received from those who were acquainted with no better, or has perhaps prevented their continuing to be generally studied. The opinions of critics, however supported by general principles and rules, is of no authority in opposition to this  
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general sense of mankind. When sentiment is clear and distinct, we may acquiesce in it, without any danger of error; but in deducing general conclusions, on this as well as on every other subject, errors are frequently committed. The business of the critic is only to investigate the causes of those pleasures or of that disgust which mankind actually receive from works of imagination: he has by no means a right to determine that what pleases is not good, or that what displeases is not bad: if the former be a transgression of the rules laid down by critics, this proves only that these rules are arbitrary and wrong. The censures of critics, pronounced upon a cool discussion, may retard the general approbation of a work of merit, by keeping some from attending to it, by prejudicing some against it, and by making others diffident of the rectitude of their own taste: but it cannot totally or finally obstruct it; the judgment of sentiment gradually gets the better of the judgment of criticism; the critics differ among themselves, this hastens the prevalence of the public taste; critics themselves yield to it, or if a few continue obstinate, they are neglected, and it never fails to triumph at length.

IN this account of the standard of taste, most men are disposed to rest. Yet it seems not

not to be altogether satisfying. The following observations are designed to shew in what respects it is exceptionable, and to point out, in what manner a more precise standard may be derived from philosophy.

If it be certain that some works have been generally approved in all places and in all ages, it would be absurd to affirm, that these ought not to be approved. It would be to contradict universal experience, in a case in which experience is the sole foundation of a legitimate judgment. Some have now and then ventured on such contradiction, with respect to works which have obtained the most extensive and unanimous approbation : but it has almost always been easy to discover the cause of their singularity. Scaliger was eager to depreciate Horner : but he was actuated by partiality to his countryman Virgil. It was the fashion, for some time, with a party of the French, to deny almost all merit to the ancients : but it was in order to exalt a set of favourite writers, who had adopted a manner so different, that they and the ancients could not be admired at once. The detection of such motives excludes persons from the number of impartial witnesses and capable judges. Their dissent is no exception from the unanimity of the sentence. If there be no other exception,

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the author or performer certainly possesses the real excellence: his having been always and every where approved as excellent, is a full evidence of it.

BUT is there any work of the excellence of which we truly have this evidence? I doubt if there be. The Iliad of Homer, the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, the orations of Demosthenes, gained the approbation of the enlightened Greeks, were admired by the Romans, and continue to be the delight and study of the moderns. But does this amount to the consent of all ages and nations? Not at all. It is only the consent of the European nations, and a few others connected with them, and similar in their sentiments and manners. But there are regions in the East, exceeding Europe in extent, and in the number of inhabitants, who have never given their suffrage in favour of these works. Among them too, poetry and eloquence have flourished: they have productions in both these arts, which have obtained, for an equal number of ages, as extensive and as unanimous an approbation. In these productions we acknowledge the fire of genius, but censure numberless irregularities and extravagancies. Were they acquainted with the works which we admire, they would no doubt censure them with equal severity.

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Here then are two parties, equally numerous, equally unanimous, pronouncing opposite decisions. On what grounds shall we give the preference to one of them? Shall we set aside the judgment of the Asiatics, by pronouncing them destitute of that sedateness of reason, that purity of discernment, that elegance of mind, that simplicity of relish, that extensive acquaintance with the varieties of art, which are necessary for bestowing authority on their sentiments? But will not they, in their turn, decline the authority of our judgment, as proceeding from a tameness of imagination, a coldness of spirit, a preciseness of thinking, or a dullness of feeling? And with equal reason, if the question be such as only the number of suffrages can determine. If, therefore, universal or even general approbation be the sole touchstone of real excellence, there is no such excellence; the touchstone, however promising in appearance, vanishes in the moment of application, as if it were but the effect of some of those enchantments in which the magicians of oriental story are expert. The highest sanction that works of the greatest merit can possibly obtain, is the approbation of a majority: and in every case it will be difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain on what side the majority is. If, notwithstanding this uncertainty, the relative merit of works whose reputation is

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equally established in different regions, can be determined, it must be by criticism or philosophy. To the music and the architecture of distant and unconnected nations, these remarks are still more applicable than to their poetry. They are likewise applicable in some measure, though not perhaps equally, to their painting.

BUT suppose that, in fixing a general or an universal approbation, it were fair to take into the account only those nations who have been improved by an acquaintance with European arts. This is indeed a liberty which we always take without examining scrupulously, how far it is fair. Yet still such general approbation would not be a just or impartial standard of merit. It is not impossible, and therefore we may put the case, that a work of great excellence in any of the fine arts, should be produced by some singular genius, in an obscure and inconsiderable country, which has little connexion or intercourse with foreigners : it could obtain only a very limited approbation. A work of no greater excellence, appearing in a more conspicuous region, meets with approbation incomparably more extensive. From the very circumstance which we have mentioned, the poems of Camoens, however much approved by capable judges who were acquainted

ed with them, have been known but to a few; and till very lately the poems of Ossian have been almost totally unknown. If the extent of the approbation which a work obtains, depend so much on the celebrity of the country where it is produced, and on other circumstances wholly accidental or extraneous, it cannot alone or immediately be the measure of its intrinsic merit. It will perhaps be said, that works of real excellence will be approved as soon as they are rescued from their accidental obscurity. But till this shall happen, have the few who know them, no means of judging concerning their degree of genuine merit, or of justifying their expectation that they will be approved in proportion to it? They can justify it, only by applying to them general principles which belong to criticism or to philosophy. The expectation may possibly be disappointed. If it be, can we conclude with certainty that these few were mistaken in their opinion of excellence? We cannot in every case: the very merit of such works may contribute to the disappointment. The greater the originality which they possess, the more unlike they will be to the works which men have been accustomed to admire; habit will prevent their relishing their beauties. Repeated perusals might wear off the prejudice: but when men have already sufficient entertainment from works which they  
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are prepared for relishing, they are not always willing to undergo the labour necessary for correcting their prejudices and conquering their habits. By this means, works circumstanced as we have supposed, may be prevented from ever rising, in the general estimation, to the rank which they deserve to hold. If they can be raised to it, it will probably be by the instructions of the true critic, unfolding their uncommon beauties, and forming the general taste to the perception of them. But though he should be unsuccessful, his instructions may nevertheless be solid, and their objects highly excellent.

IT deserves to be particularly observed, that general approbation can never be applied, with any degree of exactness, as a standard in comparing ancient with modern works, at least in the arts which employ language. The latter are necessarily deprived of the consent of *ages* which the former have obtained ; and must therefore be pronounced inferior without further examination, if to have pleased *always* be an essential character of the truest excellence. They stand likewise on a very different ground for obtaining the consent of *nations*. The language of the ancients is almost equally understood in all the polished nations of Europe : and therefore their beauties may be alike relished

lished by the capable judges of all these nations. Modern languages have generally a more limited reception. On this account the ancients, independent of their merit, from the very nature of the language which they use, will of course obtain a wider concurrence of nations, than the moderns. This circumstance has contributed to procure them a degree of estimation, perhaps greater than they can justly claim. If it shall be said, that some modern languages are studied and understood by as many nations as any ancient language, and will therefore introduce the works which are written in them, to a no less general approbation ; it may be answered, that this only creates a new difficulty in comparing these works with such as are written in other modern languages. Good authors in a language, no doubt promote the study of it among foreigners ; but this is not the only cause of its obtaining a wide reception : the prevalence of the French language cannot be ascribed solely to unrivalled excellence in the French writers ; it is much more owing to other causes. But having once taken place by any means, it immediately renders multitudes competent judges of the writers of France, who can give no suffrage in favour of the best writers of other countries. But an advantage so accidental cannot be decisive of their superiority. On the other hand,

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works written in the modern language of any country, though thus necessarily circumscribed with respect to the approbation of other nations, have a considerable advantage for obtaining approbation, in another point of view extensive. They will be, in that particular country, understood by a greater number, and consequently more generally approved, than either foreign or ancient works can be: they will likewise be more perfectly understood, and for this reason more exquisitely relished and more highly approved. If the ancients please many capable judges in several nations, a modern may equally please perhaps as many, though all belonging to one nation. By what rule can the weight of the suffrages be determined? In a word, if we rest in general approbation as the sole criterion of excellence, the difficulties which occur in comparing the ancients with the moderns, or the writers of one country with those of others, appear to be inextricable. If their relative merit can be at all ascertained, it must be by applying to them some general principles derived from criticism and philosophy, which are not affected by the accidental advantages or disadvantages peculiar to each of them.

THE observations which we have suggested, concerning the difficulty both of ascertaining general

general approbation, and of applying it as a standard to works of taste, have weight even with respect to such as have obtained the highest degree of it: but in proportion as any work falls short of universality of approbation, they have with respect to it the greater force.

If, however, general approbation, when once obtained, might be considered as the standard of excellence, another difficulty will still remain. No new work can obtain general approbation in an instant: it is of slow growth, it requires considerable time to reach maturity. In this interval, the intrinsic merit of the work is the same that it is afterwards: but there will be no possible means of appreiating it. Must every man then suspend his judgment, till numbers be prepared to declare their sentiments together? Must he obstinately refuse all credit to his own feelings and discernment, till the time come for the public to give its voice? This would be in some measure inconsistent with that authority of sentiment, on account of which it claims to be a standard. But this is also in many cases impossible: when a man, who is conscious of good taste, finds himself delighted with a new work, he hesitates not to pronounce it excellent, without waiting for the public suffrage; he is confident that it will obtain it in due time. He finds not  
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his confidence merely on his feelings ; he justifies it by reasons ; he shews that it has beauties similar, equal, or superior to those which have generally pleased. His producing such reasons implies an acknowledgment, that sentiment may be tried by general principles, and is authorized by its coincidence with them. Before Milton's Paradise Lost had time to rise from obscurity, Denham and Dryden expressed their admiration of it without reserve ; and when the one pronounced it the noblest poem that ever was written in any language or in any age, and the other gave it the preference not only to contemporary, but also to ancient works ; they both intimated, that they supported their judgment by general principles of comparison between this poem and other poems.

THOUGH general or universal approbation be assigned as the test of excellence, it really amounts to no more than the approbation of a very few. Multitudes are excluded from the right of suffrage, as being in one respect or another unfit to judge ; the select few take the lead ; what pleases their vigorous and improved taste, ought to please all ; whoever dissent, ought to impute it solely to his own want of taste. An authority so absolute and uncontrollable had need to be clearly established.

ed. But in determining, who are the persons entitled to exercise it, such difficulties must occur as cannot fail to render it in some degree uncertain. No doubt, true taste will gradually gain the ascendency by its native force and influence. But must we wait till this has happened, before we can judge with any probability, whether it be true taste or not? Are there no means of estimating the goodness of a man's taste, except the success of his decisions? If there be, they must be derived either from a philosophical investigation of the characters of true taste, or from his producing arguments in support of his decisions, the use whereof implies an acknowledgment of general principles, to which an appeal may lie from mere sentiment. But suppose the few sufficiently authorized to pass a decisive judgment, in what manner does it diffuse itself among the generality, and obtain their concurrence? It cannot exact their implicit acquiescence; wherever this takes place, it continues to be only the particular judgment of a few. It may operate by a sort of contagion; by exciting their attention and directing their notice to what would have otherwise escaped them, it may enable their own taste to exert itself in a coincident determination. But it may likewise gain ground, and often does, by proving that it is not arbitrary, by supporting itself by

argument, by appealing to some general rules of criticism, or some general principles of human nature. It is in this way that Addison recommended the beauties of Milton; and in this way the admiration of Shakespear has been heightened, extended, and justified \*.

No work of taste is absolutely perfect: beauties and blemishes, excellencies and faults are intermixed: and sometimes both are found in a very great degree. In this case, all that can be expected from mere sentiment, is the being pleased with the former, and displeased with the latter. Its judgment can amount only to a number of detached, unrelated approbations and disapprobations, or to an indefinite approbation or disapprobation of the work upon the whole. To render either definite, to form one decisive judgment of the work, to be able to assign it its due place in the scale of merit, we must at least reflect upon the several feelings, whether of pleasure or disgust, which the different parts or qualities of the work excite; we must estimate the importance of each; we must weigh them against one another, and determine the excess.

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\* In the same way, the public approbation is claimed in favour of the Poems of Ossian, in a *critical dissertation* on them, which displays fine taste, confirming its sentiments by the deductions of sound criticism.

Even this implies the necessity and the legitimacy of reasoning and discussion. But this will not be sufficient : our feelings are fleeting and unsteady ; it is not easy to render them so fixed or so well defined, that we can estimate them with exactness, or compare and balance them with accuracy. To render our judgment of a whole work precise, we must ascertain and reflect upon the causes of our feelings, the qualities from which they result : these are more fixed and more definite ; we can contemplate them more steadily, estimate them more justly, balance them more nicely, and determine their proportion more exactly. But the abstraction by which these qualities are analyzed, the investigation by which the causes of our feelings are discovered, fall properly within the province of criticism and philosophy. It is in the same manner, by a comparison, not of our sensations themselves, but of their causes, that we can judge with precision of the relative excellence of different works.

WHAT is said concerning the formation of public taste, and its authority as the standard of excellence, derives a great part of its plausibility from the opposition which is studiously, but without reason, stated between the critic and the man of taste. The critic is supposed  
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to be a person wholly destitute of taste, incapable of sentiment, who, with absolute frigidity, examines a work by certain mechanical rules, framed without any regard to what actually pleases or displeases, nay often in contradiction to it. That the opinion of such a person ought to yield to his who has lively and vigorous sensations, that it can merit no degree of deference, will be readily acknowledged. But it by no means follows, that the decisions of genuine criticism are of no authority, or that general principles, properly investigated and established, may not be a surer criterion of excellence, than mere feelings of pleasure or disgust, unarranged and unexplained. In the composition of the genuine critic, the very first ingredient is vigorous taste\*. If he is to be distinguished from the man of taste, it must be by restricting this latter epithet to the person who feels strongly, but cannot explain what it precisely is that pleases or displeases him, or in what manner his feelings are produced. But if it be thus restricted, few will be disposed to place the authority of the man of taste above that of the critic. It is the critic, it is he who not only feels strongly, but is also capable of reflecting on his feelings, of accounting for them, of distinguishing their objects, and tracing out their causes, that is naturally

\* See Part iii. sect. 3.

naturally allowed to take the lead in pronouncing concerning works of taste ; it is the concurrence of persons of this character, that enlightens and directs the judgment of the generality. From discussion, therefore, as well as from sentiment, general approbation derives its very existence. It is confessed, that the critic has a right to investigate the causes of our pleasure or disgust : but if this investigation contributes to render our judgment more precise and certain, it will follow, that it provides us with a more accurate standard than mere sentiment. It is denied, that he has any right to pronounce that not good, which actually pleases, or that not bad, which actually displeases. In opposition to general sentiment, he can have no right to determine, and the true critic never will determine : But to deny that he has a right to pronounce that not good, which actually pleases some, and that not bad, which actually displeases some, would be to establish the indisputable authority of every taste. He has a right to distinguish the natural from the accidental, the sound from the unsound ; and it is he that can distinguish them in the most satisfying manner ; it is only by the general principles which he investigates, that the distinction can be justified.

## S E C T. V.

*That the Standard of Taste is to be found in general Principles.*

THUS, in whatever light we consider general or universal approbation, we find great difficulties in applying it as the sole or the immediate standard of excellence in works of taste; and all these difficulties seem to point to science, to criticism, or philosophy, as capable of supplying us with a standard more determinate, more accurate, and more easily applicable \*. Indeed to such a standard, the general sense of mankind leads them constantly

\* It is the professed design of D'ALEMBERT'S *Reflections on Taste*, to prove that philosophy justly claims authority as a standard in matters of taste, and to suggest some rules and cautions respecting the application of it. And the ingenious author of *Elements of Criticism*, after having allowed general approbation all the weight which he thought that it could possess, concludes with referring to *general principles* of human nature, scientifically investigated, the principles that ought to govern the taste of individuals, as a standard in which he puts great confidence, as more unerring than any selection of the persons capable of judging; and with intimating that to lay a foundation for this branch of knowledge, that is in other words, to form such a standard, is the declared purpose of that work. *Chap. 25.*  
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ly to have recourse, however much they may in words seem to acquiesce in sentiment as ultimate. Every man whom we acknowledge to possess any degree of taste, not only approves or disapproves, but specifies what it precisely is that pleases or displeases him, what is the nature of the pleasure or the disgust which it excites, and what the manner in which it excites them. The very operation of taste, when in any measure improved, implies so much of judgment, reflection, and analysis, as plainly intimates how serviceable they may be in defining, vindicating, or correcting its sensations. When our judgment in a particular instance is called in question, we reckon it always allowable to support it by reasons; and our reasons are always deduced from principles more or less general; the authority of which in preference to mere sentiment, we therefore tacitly acknowledge by our using them. In every art there are some general rules of established authority, to which all readily appeal, and which all reverence as the fundamental laws by which the differences of individuals must be terminated. Were general approbation the only standard,

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at the end. This observation appears to me to be perfectly just and well founded, and will perhaps be both confirmed and illustrated by the remarks which I am now making.

so much as to point out beauties which have, by any means, failed of actually obtaining it, would be not only useless, but preposterous and absurd. Since then it is clear that general principles and rules have authority in matters of taste, it only remains to explain, in what manner they serve as the real and just standard of excellence or defect.

WHEN we deny that general approbation is the proper or immediate standard, we are far from insinuating that it is of no account. It is of very great account. Though it be not itself the standard, it is the materials of which the standard must be composed : it is the block from which it must be hewed out : it is the principal of those ingredients from which it must be extracted. It holds the same place in this enquiry, that experiments and observations concerning the real phænomena of things, hold in physical investigations of the laws of the material world. It is from the experiments and observations, that all just conclusions concerning these laws must be deduced ; it is only by examining and comparing them, that the laws of nature can be discovered : that cannot be truly a law of nature, which is contradictory to the phænomena ; however plausible it may appear, however strongly supported by some of them, there must be an error in the reasoning

reasoning by which it is inferred : such error may very readily be committed ; many false hypotheses have been adopted in natural philosophy ; but it will not follow, that we ought to rest satisfied with observing the phænomena, not attempting to investigate the laws according to which they are produced, or that these laws may not be traced out successfully by a more careful and skilful induction : when any general law is traced out, it accounts for phænomena which at first sight appear unaccountable ; it reconciles such as appear discordant, and often shews that they proceed from the same principle differently modified ; it answers many purposes which could not be answered by a mere collection of the experiments from which it is inferred. All this is directly and without difficulty applicable to our present subject. It is only from what actually pleases and displeases in works of imagination, that the true critic deduces his general principles and rules : it is on what has pleased or displeased universally that he lays the greatest stress ; he founds his conclusions, not on his own feelings only, but on the common feelings of men ; it is from the most excellent and admired performances in every art, that the rules of that art ought to be, and by judicious critics always have been taken : so far is he from despising sentiment, that he pays some regard to what-

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ever has actually pleased or displeased any ; he acknowledges that it has some sort of fitness to please or displease ; and he examines whether it is owing to a natural or to a distempered state of the organ. His decisions, his general principles and rules claim no authority in *opposition* to the common sense of mankind ; if they really oppose it, if they be irreconcileable to the unperverted sentiments of any individual, they are false, there is some mistake in the induction by which they were established. Men are necessarily fallible ; many false principles and arbitrary rules of criticism have been proposed : but we cannot hence conclude, that we ought not to search for any principles or rules, or that it is impossible to find out such as are true and solid. Suppose that in forming general conclusions there is always a possibility of error, but that in acquiescing in clear and distinct sensations there is none ; yet the former may in some instances have indubitable certainty, and may be applicable to many uses, for which the latter are insufficient : they may lead us to perceive how works whose qualities are in appearance contrary, come nevertheless all to give us pleasure ; they may convince us that sentiments seemingly incompatible, excited in different persons by the same work or even the same part of a work, proceed from principles equally

ly natural to man ; it may enable us to reconcile the most dissimilar sentiments, to account for the most singular, to explain which are most conformable to the real constitution of human nature. This is all that can be expected from a standard of taste ; and this, general principles only can perform. In a word, as it is not a mere comprehension of the separate phænomena of things, but a discernment of their common causes and laws that immediately serves to explain the operations and the course of nature ; as it is the knowledge of the general principles of mechanics that best enables us to judge of the construction and merit of a complicated machine ; so it is an acquaintance with the objects and the sources of our pleasures, not an undistinguishing attention to them as they affect the several individuals, that proximately contributes to ascertain the genuine excellence in the fine arts.

NOT only is every work of taste complicated, containing lights, shades, and blenishes ; but almost every part of the work is in like manner complex, made up of something that pleases and something that is in itself indifferent. To separate these, to distinguish the excellence from what serves only as a vehicle for it, or from the fault which adheres closely to it, to point out what it precisely

cisely is in a passage, that gives us pleasure or disgust, is the lowest and simplest effort of criticism. It is a degree of reflection, an exercise of abstraction, which every man of tolerable acuteness of taste employs for himself: without it there could be no distinct perception, but only a blind, enthusiastic feeling. It cannot therefore be expected that by this alone, criticism should supply us with a very precise standard. Yet even by this, it gives a standard more accurate than mere sentiment. It enlightens us so far as to prevent our ascribing our pleasure or our disgust, to causes which have no share in the production of them. It prepares us for discerning and estimating passages in which there is the same excellence or the same fault, but differently accompanied. It leads us to form our judgment of a work, from its intrinsic qualities, not from any extraneous or unessential circumstances. It substitutes a determinate judgment, in the place of an indefinite, indiscriminate admiration. It defends us from the danger of being so much dazzled with shining beauties in a work, as to become insensible to gross deformities mingled with them, or perhaps to mistake them also for beauties. It is absolutely necessary, in order to our ascertaining the real degree of merit to which a work is entitled; confused consciousness of the feelings which it has anyhow

how excited, would be totally insufficient for this purpose.

ALL objects which produce the same species of pleasure, however different in other respects, have some qualities in common. It is by means of these qualities, that they produce this pleasure. It belongs to criticism to investigate and ascertain these qualities: and the discovery of them contributes in many ways, both to render our appretiation of excellence more easy and accurate, and to furnish principles for deciding between discordant appretiations. The qualities of an object, which gratify us, are more fixt and definite than the sensation which they excite. When we attempt to confine our attention to the latter, it as it were twinkles in the eye, and eludes a steady contemplation: but when we turn our view to the former, we can contemplate them at leisure, examine them on all sides, and determine their precise dimensions. We can compare them with the same qualities in other objects, decide which object possesses them in the highest degree, and infer which ought to give the highest pleasure. We can compare them with the sensation which they produce; examine whether it be exactly adequate to them, whether it be rendered more intense than they alone could have rendered it, by the operation

operation of other qualities of a similar tendency, in this instance conjoined with it, or whether it be weakened by the conjunction of qualities of an opposite tendency. When we discern that an object which we approve, has the same general qualities with other objects which generally please, we are satisfied that our approbation is right ; when we evince that it has them, we account for our approbation, we justify it, and are entitled to condemn the taste which disapproves that object, or is indifferent to it, as perverted or defective. Many of those qualities in objects, from which the pleasures of taste result, are capable of being measured with considerable accuracy. The degree of uniformity, for instance, of variety, of amplitude, of fitness for its end, which a particular object possesses, can generally be defined with tolerable precision. This gives a rule for assigning to each of them its own rank. Among beautiful objects, that is, the most beautiful, which has the highest degree of those qualities which are acknowledged to constitute beauty. Of grand objects, that is, the grandest, which possesses the greatest unbroken amplitude. Of descriptions of an object, that is, the finest, which impresses on the mind an image of its most characteristical and striking features. If a man's sentiments be not proportioned to the degrees of such qualities,

lities, which objects are acknowledged to possess, they must be so far wrong.

IT is chiefly attention to the general qualities of objects which gratify taste, that enables us to perceive to what class the gratification belongs. The gratifications of taste agree in this, that they are all pleasant ; they are likewise analogous in other respects : if we regard only our feelings, we cannot sufficiently distinguish them into kinds. But the quality, or the combination of qualities, which produces one gratification, is very different from that which produces another : by turning our view to it, we can decide with certainty, of what kind our pleasure is, and either correct or confute his opinion who, from indefinite feeling, would refer it to a different kind. If the object which pleases us, possess uniformity, variety, and proportion, we are sure that it is beautiful. If it possess amplitude along with simplicity, we know that it is grand. We can thus determine, whether different works gratify taste in the same way or in different ways. This is of great advantage in comparing them : if they please in the same way, our business is, to enquire which possesses the greatest degree of those qualities from which the pleasure results ; if in different ways, we must estimate the moment of the several species of pleasure.

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IT is generally by a combination of different qualities, that any object gratifies taste. One object excels in one of these qualities, another object in another of them. In this case, there is a difficulty in determining which object deserves the preference ; we cannot always say, which of these qualities gives separately the highest pleasure. The Grecian architecture excels in simplicity ; this is unquestionably a source of pleasure : the Gothic has variety ; this is likewise a source of pleasure : Which of them is most approveable ? Of two sublime objects, one exceeds the other in magnitude, but falls as much below it in simplicity : How shall we determine, which is the most sublime ? But this difficulty is not always insurmountable. It may happen, for instance, that one of the objects has more approveable qualities, the other no more : the Grecian architecture has proportion, the Gothic is destitute of it ; the addition of this quality plainly turns the balance in favour of the former. Thus again, every work has its end and use : some qualities productive of pleasure, may by their situation be subservient to this ; other qualities very pleasing in themselves, may by their position obstruct it : on this principle, we justly condemn very beautiful passages in a poem, and very beautiful figures in a picture, as blemishes,

mishes, which take from the merit of the whole.

THERE are many combinations of qualities, each of which produces a distinct species of pleasure. A complete enumeration of these combinations would enable us to determine many questions concerning discordant sentiments. In particular, it would supply principles for a just estimate of all such sentiments as are of a complicated nature. It is in these that men are most apt to differ, and general principles to run counter to the feelings of individuals. A person who is equally attentive to all the pleasing qualities which are united in an object, and equally formed for relishing them all, will approve it more highly than another person who has overlooked some of these qualities, or is defective in that sense which is adapted to the perception of them. The former will prefer that object to one which has some of these qualities in greater perfection, but is destitute of the rest: the latter will give the contrary judgment. It is by analysing the object, that the difference can be adjusted. One man sets a high value on a particular object; to justify this, he shews that it possesses a great degree of those qualities which produce a particular species of pleasure: another, who sets less value on it, acknowledging this, points

out some blemishes which justly bring down its value : and by doing so, evinces that the former has given a wrong judgment through want of discernment sufficient for detecting these blemishes.—A full enumeration of all the qualities which are fit to gratify taste, would go far to banish contracted rules of criticism. Such rules have given the most plausible handle for calling in question the authority of general principles. When a thing is contrary to rule, and yet actually pleases, we conclude with reason that the rule is false. The qualities which it requires do actually please : but objects destitute of them, may likewise please by means of other qualities ; of these the critic was not aware when he formed his rule : he did right in pronouncing that the former set of qualities are fit to gratify taste ; but he did wrong in affirming, that they are absolutely necessary to its gratification : he mistook for a general canon, what is only one of the cases subordinate to that canon. That the regularity and the unities of the ancient drama, pointed out by Aristotle, are means of pleasing, is certain : the fault lies only in reckoning them essential. Shakespear has given convincing evidence, that a dramatic work in which they are totally neglected, may yet have other qualities productive of very high gratification. Partial and confined principles  
of

of criticism in any art, arise only from our being unacquainted with, or not taking into the account, some class of qualities which constitute a real excellence in that art.

IN a word, an analysis of the several combinations of qualities which are agreeable or disagreeable to taste, would enable us to compare and to fix the rank of all those objects which please by means of the same combination: the degree of these qualities, which belongs to each of them, can generally be ascertained with abundant accuracy; and every sentiment which is disproportioned to the acknowledged degree of pleasing qualities in its object, may confidently be condemned as wrong and perverted. The only difficulty would be, to decide between objects which, possessing different qualities, yield distinct species of pleasure. In this, attention to these qualities, it must be acknowledged, can give us no assistance. But this is a case in which it is seldom necessary to decide; there is often an impropriety in attempting it. To render objects capable of being compared, they must have something in common: it is only objects which have some quality in common, that can be compared in respect of the degree of it. When two pleasures are different in kind, it is not generally of importance, it is not always possible

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to determine which deserves the preference ; it is sufficient to define the kind to which each belongs. Whether beauty of form, or harmony of sounds, whether the sublime or the pathetic, whether the witty or the humourous, give the highest pleasure, are questions which, with many similar ones, if it be difficult to answer, it is not perhaps altogether proper to propose. Yet there are general principles which may lead to the solution even of such questions. In order to discover them, let us turn our view from the external objects of our pleasures, to their internal causes.

THE sources of all the sentiments of taste lie in the mind. The qualities of objects affect, in a certain manner, some principles of human nature, which by their operation, either singly or several in conjunction, produce gratification or disgust. It is the business of philosophical criticism, to investigate these principles : many of them have been pointed out in the course of our enquiry. Simplicity, for instance, occasions easiness of conception ; novelty or variety, an effort to conceive ; amplitude, an expansion of soul. This takes place in every individual, in numberless cases ; he is therefore certain from his own experience, that it is conformable to the constitution

tion of his nature. It is likewise to every man, matter of experience, that some of these modes of conception are ordinarily pleasant, and others ordinarily painful. The experience with respect to both these points is extensive, various, and unequivocal; for it occurs not only in matters of taste, but likewise in science, and in common life. When, therefore, taste is analysed into its simple principles, these will serve as a criterion for distinguishing the genuine from the false sentiment: for if, in a particular instance, either an object acknowledged to have certain qualites, fails to produce the mode of conception generally correspondent to it; or that mode of conception, when confessedly produced, fails to give the pleasure or the pain which it uses to give; it must be owing to some indisposition, distemper or perversion of soul. The person who labours under it, may have convincing evidence of this, not only from the general experience of mankind, but from his own. Often too the precise distemper of mind, which he has contracted, may be discovered; and his sentiments corrected, at least satisfactorily accounted for, even to himself.

WHEN taste is analysed into its simple principles, it will be found that, in its province as well as in that of the external senses, pleasure and

and pain border closely upon, and sometimes by an almost imperceptible gradation run into one another. Both facility and difficulty of conception, are pleasant when moderate ; but both become painful when they exceed a certain degree, the former producing languor, and the latter fatigue. What expands or elevates the mind is agreeable, but an object may give uneasiness by straining its powers. It is no wonder then, that what gratifies one man, sometimes disgusts another : these contrary effects may proceed from the very same principle, in minds possessed of different degrees of vigour. To evince this, is in some measure to give an account of them : and whenever it can be ascertained, which is the degree that commonly belongs to mankind, this decides which is in the present case right sentiment, and which the wrong. If a person is in one instance disgusted with such an effort to conceive an object, as is commonly agreeable both to other men and to himself, it must be owing to a fit of sickly languor, of which he may be rendered as sensible, as of an accidental imbecillity of body.

DIFFERENT qualities in objects, may affect the same simple principles of human nature, and affect them in a manner nearly similar. To point out the principle thus affected, is to prove

prove it natural and right, that these objects, however unlike or opposite in some respects, should be equally approved ; and that either of them should attach the person who has attended to it alone. It is not necessary to proscribe either the correct fable, and regular sublime of the classical writer, or the wild fiction, and extravagant greatness of the oriental tale ; however distant in degree their merit is, both have real merit ; the gratification produced by both is in a great measure resolvable into the same ultimate principles of the mind, and is sufficiently accounted for by being resolved into them. Sentiments in appearance very dissimilar, are reconciled by being traced up to a simple principle common to all men ; as the ascent of vapours and the descent of rain are shewn to be consistent by being explained from the very same law of gravitation. In taste, as in the material world, the phænomena are various and mutable ; but the laws of nature, from which they proceed, are universal, uniform, and fixt.

THE general principles and laws into which the sentiments of taste must be finally resolved, are numerous. One of them, however real and powerful, may in a particular situation be counteracted by another. A projectile force makes an heavy body to fly upwards : it over-balances

balances the effect of gravitation, but does not destroy the principle: the observation of it only suggests an enquiry concerning the nature of that force. In like manner, when a particular judgment in the fine arts, seems to be contradictory to a general law of human nature, it often amounts only to this, that the operation of this law is suspended by the opposition of another law equally authentic: and by the discovery and explication of the latter, that judgment is shewn to be natural, in the circumstances in which it is pronounced; and we are furnished with the means of determining, whether these circumstances indicate a sound or a diseased temperament, a free or a constrained exertion of the powers of taste.

If a person has attended only to some of those simple principles of human nature, which are the sources of our pleasures, he will be ready to fall into mistakes in explaining these pleasures. He will resolve every pleasure into one or other of the few principles with which he is acquainted; and a pleasure which cannot be referred to any of them, he will endeavour to discredit. Hence have arisen many of the critical rules which contradict sentiment and experience. Simplicity in any system, is an excellence: but an injudicious affectation of simplicity has, in every species of philosophy,

phy, occasioned many ill-founded hypotheses. Genuine simplicity consists not merely in resolving phenomena into a few principles; but in rendering the principles, by a just induction, as general and comprehensive as possible. If any thing which actually pleases, cannot be accounted for from any general principle hitherto established, there must be some other real principle of human nature, yet unexplored, to which it ought to be referred. An investigation of all the immediate or proximate sources of the pleasures of taste, together with an analysis of these into the more ultimate principles of the mind, which give them power, is necessary for establishing general rules of real authority. And if all such principles were traced out, and the proper influence of each of them acknowledged, the result would be, a system of rules coinciding exactly with the natural, unperverted sentiments of individuals, and fit for discriminating them from such as are unnatural and vitiated.

ACQUAINTANCE with the general principles of taste, puts it in our power, in many cases, to compare pleasures different in *kind*, and to determine to which the preference is due. That one of these principles is the source of higher pleasure than another, may be proved by its influence in numberless situations of hu-

man life. We have experience every day, that moderate difficulty gives higher pleasure than facility ; it is in activity that man finds his chief enjoyment. This leads us to conclude, that such pleasures of taste as are resolvable into a sense of difficulty, are superior to those which hold of facility. The conclusion is just ; in all the fine arts, it is the work which draws out the powers of the mind, and gives them play, that excites our admiration. Again, an object which gratifies only one of these principles, must yield to an object which gratifies several of them at once. Beauty addresses itself to more mental principles than novelty ; and it will be universally acknowledged to be a greater excellence. There is not perhaps any general character by which the lesser kinds of poetry can be more precisely distinguished from the higher than this, that they touch fewer principles of our nature, and occasion a more imperfect exertion of soul.

THUS, as in natural philosophy it is not collections of experiments and observations, but the general conclusions legitimately deduced from them, that amount to an explication of the course of nature ; so in the fine arts it is not the several sentiments of individuals, but just conclusions deduced from them, concerning the qualities in objects which gratify taste,  
and

and the simple mental principles from whose operation the gratification is derived, that serve immediately for estimating excellence or faultiness. To assert this, is not to establish general rules, in opposition to sentiment; for they are wholly founded upon sentiment, and if they be just, cannot but be conformable to it. It is from it they derive their whole authority: but this hinders not that, after having been thus duly vested with authority, they may perform what it could not so well accomplish by itself. In every part of knowledge, general rules and principles give us great advantage for judging concerning particular phenomena. If none of the laws of matter were yet investigated, a great number of experiments, and each of them frequently repeated, would be necessary for establishing any one general conclusion with certainty: but after these laws have been ascertained, a certain conclusion conformable to them, may often be deduced from a single experiment carefully conducted; our very limited experience in this particular instance becomes unquestionable by borrowing the force of that extensive experience from which the known laws of nature have been already inferred. In like manner, when excellence in the fine arts has been traced up to its general principles, we are not obliged to wait the event of general approbation,

tion, before we can determine the rank to which a new performance is entitled ; every man of true taste may determine it, by the feelings which it produces in himself, compared with, and authorised by, well established principles of criticism in the kind ; when he determines it with assurance, he does not fondly *presume* that others will approve or disapprove, because he does ; but he *foresees* that their judgment will coincide with his own, because he perceives that it is justified by those very principles to which the general judgment is in all other cases consonant.

To those who are destitute of taste, general principles and rules, however just, will not supply the want of it. Whenever they pretend to judge, they will go wrong : not because the principles and rules are useless, but because they are incapable of applying them to the present case. Though a person be acquainted with all the laws of motion, he cannot by them account for a phenomenon till he has first observed it : the phenomena of excellence or faultiness in any work of art, taste alone can lead us to perceive ; if after this, general principles can give us assurance, whether our manner of perceiving them be right or wrong, singular or co-incident with that of others, it is all that is requisite for entitling

titling them to be regarded as the proper and immediate standard of taste.

SUBMISSION to their authority in this extent can have no tendency to repress the sensibility, to abate the ardor, or to diminish the pleasures of taste. It by no means substitutes frigid discussion and analysis, in the place of warm and enrapturing sensations. It allows us to give full scope to every feeling which a work impresses on us ; it even requires us to give scope to it, that we may form a genuine conception of its features. While sense is touched, reflection is in a great measure suspended, and general principles are little attended to even by those who are best acquainted with them. It is after sense has performed its office, it is after we have felt ; it is when we come to review our feelings, when we find reason to suspect that they need to be corrected, or when we are inclined to justify them, that we recollect the general principles to which they ought to be conformable. With the fullest indulgence of sentiment, the application of these principles in this situation, cannot possibly interfere. But if the habit of examining our sentiments by them, should lead us to intermix attention to them, with the first exertions of sensation, this will not damp its vivacity, or cool its fervour. It will always improve the feelings, and heighten

heighten the gratifications of a correct taste ; by suggesting a view of their causes, it will add a new ingredient ; by infusing a consciousness of their rectitude, it will encourage us to give up ourselves, with unrestrained confidence, to admiration and enjoyment. Sound principles of criticism can never betray us into the irksome task of disputing against our pleasant sentiments : they will generally enable us to approve, as well as to feel them ; and when at any time they condemn them, it is only to prepare us for receiving more refined pleasures.

THE investigation of general principles, and deference to them as the test and measure of excellence, far from extinguishing the fire, or confining the range of genius, will contribute most effectually to its elevation and enlargement. From a person who satisfies himself with observing and admiring a number of curious machines, the utmost that can be expected is, the production of a similar machine : it is only from him who, either by his natural sagacity, or by study, has acquired a comprehension of the general principles of mechanics, that we can expect the invention of new and dissimilar machines, or even any considerable improvement of the former. The same must happen

happen in the fine arts. Any one work is necessarily confined to the prosecution of one end, to the production of one kind of gratification ; and it can admit only one set of means for answering this purpose. The man who seeks for no other criterion of excellence, but what has always pleased, will naturally employ his attention on those works which have been distinguished by universal admiration, will think himself obliged to adhere to them as his models, will endeavour to produce the same effect by the same means, or by means as analogous as possible. If he have genius sufficient to preserve him from sinking into a servile copier, still he is no more than a successful imitator : whenever the originality of his own powers would carry him into a new track, his excursion is checked by the reflection, that this would be a deviation from the course which mankind have concurred in approving.

“ I have long been of opinion, says an elegant writer\*, that the moderns pay too blind a deference to the ancients ; and though I have the highest veneration for several of their remains, yet I am inclined to think they have occasioned us the loss of some excellent originals. Whilst it is thought sufficient praise to be their followers, genius is checked in her flights, and many a fair track

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\* *Fitzosborne's Lett.* 5.

“ lies undiscovered in the boundless regions of  
“ imagination. Thus had Virgil trusted more  
“ to his native strength, the Romans, perhaps,  
“ might have seen an original epic in their  
“ language. But Homer was considered by  
“ that admired poet as the sacred object of his  
“ first and principal attention ; and he seemed  
“ to think it the noblest triumph of genius, to  
“ be adorned with the spoils of that glorious  
“ chief.” Knowledge of the ultimate sources  
of our pleasures, tends directly to overturn  
this tyranny of precedent, and to free genius  
from the fetters which it would put upon it.  
That knowledge may enable a person to per-  
ceive that ends may be aimed at, that modifi-  
cations of pleasure may be conveyed, consider-  
ably different from those which have been at-  
tempted by preceding artists ; but equally ad-  
apted to the natural principles of the mind, and  
equally enchanting : and will thus enrich the arts  
with a new species of composition. Or it may  
lead him to discover, that an end which has been  
often pursued, will be as successfully obtained  
by other means, as by those which have been  
hitherto employed ; may prompt him to make  
trial of these ; and thus introduce an agreeable  
variety of execution. In either case, it impels  
imagination to strike into an unbeaten road,  
which blind deference to what has been uni-  
versally approved, would have deterred him  
from

from essaying. Whether by being enlightened with an uncommon comprehension of the manifold sources of human pleasures, or by being supported by an undaunted consciousness of his own abilities, Milton, it is certain, has with full success ventured on a mode of poetry, in so many respects unlike to any which had been exhibited before, that it has been made a question, whether it can properly be called heroic, or reduced to any species defined by critics. Perfectly acquainted with the ancient epos, exquisitely sensible to all its beauties, adhering to its principles so far as they are really catholic and indispensable, imitating it in the artificial structure of the fable, in the unity of the design, in the splendour of diction ; he has boldly deserted it, in conceiving an action specifically different, in carrying it on by spiritual and supernatural agents, in displaying characters which never came within the reach of human experience, in directing the whole rather to fix the mind in astonishment, than to raise it into admiration.

If the observations by which we have endeavoured to shew that principles of science form the most accurate standard of excellence in the fine arts, be well founded, they will justify our considering philosophical enquiries into the objects and the causes of our feelings, as of very

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great importance. They are not the amusements of the idle, or the entertainments of the speculative. They rest not in gratifying curiosity, by unvailing the inward springs of our sensations. They are of real and extensive utility. They both stimulate genius, and expand it. They contribute in many ways to the improvement of taste ; they excite its attention, correct its deceptions, and add both light and assurance to its sentiments : and when the decisions of individuals differ, they often reconcile them, and almost always account for them, and determine which of them deserves the preference. The principles established by means of them, admit as indubitable certainty, and as great precision, as those of any science. If human imperfection allowed them to be rendered so general as to comprehend all the simple and ultimate causes of our gratifications, and human fallibility could be secure from error in the application of them, they would be sufficient for removing every difficulty, and resolving every question, concerning the merit of works of taste.

## A P P E N D I X.

*Concerning the Question, Whether Poetry be  
properly an Imitative Art? and if it be,  
In what sense it is Imitative?*

**Q**UESTIONS merely verbal, are frivolous. Yet it is often of importance to ascertain the precise meaning of words, because impropriety in the use of them, may occasion confusion of thought, and errors in reasoning. This holds true especially of those words which denote the leading ideas on any subject: for these ideas set in a wrong light, would necessarily introduce improper modes of expression, and even false conclusions. The rules which are laid down concerning any art, must be considerably affected by the idea which is formed of the end of that art, and of the means by which the end may be attained. Whatever idea is formed of the proper nature and end of poetry, it will affect the rules which are laid down for poetry, in respect both of their nature, and of the manner of proposing them. It is therefore of importance that that idea be formed with precision.

ARISTOTLE, who was the first that endeavoured to reduce poetry to an art, and subject it

it to rules, calls it an *imitation*, without explaining particularly in what sense it is an imitation: and on his authority, poetry has ever since been called generally an *imitative art*, without either proof that it is such, or explication of how it is such. Some, however, have denied that poetry is imitative, confining this character to painting and sculpture \*. If it be false that poetry is an imitation, it is plain that many of the rules of poetry, by being detached from that idea, may be rendered simpler than they can be, when they are proposed with a relation to it. If the idea be just on the whole, but have been left indefinite, an accurate definition of it may prepare the way for rendering the rules of poetry more precise and exact, than they would otherwise have been. That poetry, as well as the other fine arts is imitative, has been supposed in the preceding Essay, and some of the general principles there investigated, will be affected by the truth or the falsehood of the supposition. I shall therefore briefly attempt a professed examination of it.

To imitate, is, to produce a resemblance of a thing. Painting and sculpture are in all cases strictly imitative. They produce a proper resemblance of the forms and proportions of visible objects, and exhibit that resemblance to the very same sense, which is adapted to the per-

\* Elements of Criticism, chap. 18.

perception of the objects themselves. Even when they go beyond the visible appearances of things, and suggest passions, emotions, and characters, still they suggest these, by producing a proper resemblance of the attitudes and features, by which the passions or characters show themselves in real life. With respect to some objects, poetry is as properly and strictly imitative: so far as it is dramatic, so far as it introduces persons acting and speaking, and does not merely *describe* how they acted or spoke, it exhibits an exact copy of their conversation and actions.

BUT whenever poetry ceases to be dramatic, whenever the poet, in his own person, describes or relates, poetry no longer exhibits a resemblance of the things related or described, in the same sense as painting does of the things which it represents. Poetry makes use of language, or artificial signs. These bear no resemblance to the things signified by them; and therefore the poem can have no proper resemblance to the subject described in it. It cannot be called an imitation of that subject, with any more propriety than an historical narration can be called an imitation of the transaction of which it gives an account.

A POETICAL description excites an idea of the object described, as conceived by the poet;  
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and, if it be well executed, a very lively idea. But it cannot, for this reason alone, deserve to be denominated an imitation of that object. For, not to insist that the idea is not properly a resemblance of the object, it is sufficient to observe that, if every species of composition which excites an idea of the subject, were to be called an imitation of it, we might call, not only history, but reasoning also, an imitation. But this would, without hesitation, be pronounced by every person, to be a gross impropriety.

No doubt, there are many circumstances peculiar to poetical description, and which render the idea excited by it, livelier and more affecting than that which is produced by a mere narration of facts, by an exact and minute delineation of a natural object, or by a process of reasoning. This difference might justify our calling the former a livelier imitation than these latter, if both were allowed to be imitations: but it cannot justify our denominating the former an imitation, while we maintain that these latter are not at all imitations.

IN consequence of the vivacity of the idea excited by them, poetical descriptions produce effects on the sentiments and passions, which cannot be produced by arguments, by historical narrations, or by physiological details. These

These make an important difference between poetry and other species of composition : but they cannot render that a proper imitation, while these are no imitations. Nothing can establish this precise distinction between them, except it could be proved that poetry produces a resemblance of the things described, and that these other kinds of composition produce no resemblance of their subjects.

SOME perhaps, when they called poetry an imitation, and history no imitation, have meant only to say, that poetry excites stronger and livelier ideas, sentiments, and emotions, than history ; that it in a manner sets the objects before our eyes ; that we almost think that we see them. This is very true : but it is improperly expressed ; the word *imitation* is used in an indefinite, figurative, and abusive sense : and the use of it in such a sense, when one professes to mark the distinctive nature of poetry, tends to mislead and introduce confusion ; especially if he reasons from this figurative sense, as if it were the literal.

POETRY is not, nor can be properly imitative, as producing a resemblance of its immediate subject. Its employing language, or instituted signs, renders it absolutely incapable of being in this sense imitative. No combination of significant sounds can form an image

image or copy, either of sensible or of intellectual objects. An historical narration of any transaction, or a naturalist's description of any visible object, would not, by any man, be called an imitation: but a painting of the same transaction, or of the same object, would be termed an imitation by all men. The only reason of the difference is, that in the latter case the artist has produced a resemblance of that transaction or object, in the former no resemblance is produced; and as little could any be produced by poetry.

IF poetry, therefore, be, strictly speaking, an imitation, it must be such in some other sense, and for some other reason, than its expressing in words the subject chosen by the poet. What other reason there is for calling poetry an imitation, we shall be assisted in conceiving, by attending for a little to the nature of painting. On account of its producing a real resemblance of things, painting is in every case an imitation. But it is not in every case, an imitation in precisely the same sense. A portrait or a landscape, is a copy of the person or the country from which it is taken; and it is an imitation only for this reason, that it exhibits a copy of these individuals. But suppose that a painter, instead of copying an individual object with which he is acquainted, invents a subject; suppose, for instance, that he paints

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an Hercules, from a standard idea in his own mind : in this case, the picture is not an imitation, as being a copy or resemblance of any one individual existing in nature. It is still an imitation, but in a quite different sense : the subject itself is an imitation ; it is, not a real individual, but a general representation of the make of a strong man. The imitation made by poetry, is of this very kind. The poet conceives his subject ; and this subject is an imitation ; it is not, in all its circumstances, a thing which really exists in nature, or a fact which has really happened ; it only resembles things which exist, or which have happened.

ALL men seem to have an implicit idea that this is the true nature of poetical imitation, though they have not unfolded it distinctly, and though perhaps they have often talked as if their idea had been different. Hence it proceeds that, whenever we speak of poetry as an imitation, we constantly call it an imitation of *Nature* ; never an imitation of the poet's particular subject, as we readily would if we considered it as denominated an imitation merely on account of the lively idea of that subject, which is excited by it.

IT is plainly in the very sense which we have pointed out, that Aristotle calls poetry an imitative

tative art. For the distinction which he makes between poetry and history, is, that history describes things as they *are*; but poetry, as they *may be*. The subject of the former is the *real*; the subject of the latter, the *probable*, or what resembles the real. And now we can perceive clearly, why we call poetry an imitation, history not. History is more than an imitation; it is an accurate detail of real things. But poetry is an imitation, and no more: it is not a description of what has actually been, but a description of something so like to real fact, that it might have been, or is probable.

A POET sometimes chuses a real thing for his subject; a particular place, for instance, or a prospect, or a series of events. So far as he adheres strictly to that real thing, his description is no more an imitation of that thing, than the geographer's, or naturalist's, or historian's account of it would be an imitation. But his description may, notwithstanding, be poetical: it may be embellished and enlivened by images, &c. not belonging to the real thing, but formed by the poet's fancy. It is the introduction of these that renders the description poetical; and these are imitations of nature, not actual appendages of the real thing described. A simple gazette in verse, would be no imitation of the events related; nor would it be a poem, however harmonious the verse might

might be ; it would be only a history in metre. Had the Iliad been a mere detail of certain events of the Trojan war, thrown into hexameters, it would have been no poem : had it adorned the detail with a variety of beautiful figures and images, it would have been poetical, but no imitation. Homer only takes his hints from the real events of the Trojan war ; he introduces the heroes who served in it ; but he engages them in whatever combats he thinks proper ; he feigns those circumstances, those turns of success, and those consequences of the several combats, which produce the best effects on the imagination and the passions ; he brings deities into the field of battle, to assist or to oppose the several combatants, who never appeared there ; but who, agreeably to the received mythology of the times, might have appeared. It is this that renders the Iliad an imitation ; and it is this that renders it, in the highest sense, a poem. The subject of every poem, is to a certain degree a *fable* ; and to the very same degree, it is an imitation.

IN a word, poetry is called an imitation, not because it produces a lively idea of its immediate subject, but because this subject itself is an imitation of some part of real nature. It is not called an imitation, to express the exactness with which it copies real things ; for then history would be a more perfect imitation than poetry.

poetry. It is called an imitation for the very contrary reason, to intimate that it is not confined to the description only of realities, but may take the liberty to describe all such things as resemble realities, and on account of that resemblance, come within the limits of probability. It were easy to shew, that this very circumstance is the source from which are derived almost all the rules of poetry, so far as they differ from those of history and other species of composition. Hence it arises, for example, that in descriptions of natural objects, the poet is not obliged to take in all their real qualities and appearances, but is allowed to select such as may form a striking picture, and to combine with these, such consistent qualities and appearances, not actually belonging to the objects, as are fit for heightening the beauty and force of the picture. Hence it arises, that poetical characters represent a whole kind, and are not required to include the peculiar and discriminating circumstances, which never fail to be joined with the generic ones, in real individuals. But it is not necessary for our present purpose, to point out what influence this view of the nature of poetry has upon its rules: it is sufficient to have ascertained the sense in which poetry is an imitative art.

T H E E N D.





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